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IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE
AN ILLUSION?

IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

*An Essay in
The Philosophy of Religion*

BY

HENRY BALMFORTH, M.A.

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER

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INTRODUCTION

IT is with very great pleasure that I contribute this word of introduction to a very interesting book. The statement of Christian faith has to be continually undertaken afresh, because the grounds of the objections urged against it are continually changing. I have no doubt at all that Mr Balmforth is right when he says that those now raised from the side of Psychology are the most formidable that have confronted us for many generations. Moreover, these objections, and the general psychological doctrines from which they are supposed to spring, are known to a larger public than has hitherto been interested in theological discussion. It is therefore a great service when a student of the subject puts forward his statement in language that almost entirely avoids technical terms.

Especially do I welcome the author's insistence that the 'religious experience' which chiefly matters is, not the intermittent ecstasy of an occasional mystic, but the whole normal experience of the religious man. This is a harder field for the psychologist to explore, but it is the more fruitful when the necessary trouble has been taken.

I hope this book will be widely read among those who are impressed by the current arguments against

vi IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION?

Christianity; they will find in it abundant reason for reconsidering some of those opinions which really represent the suppressed complexes of certain psychological writers and obtain credence only through the belief that they rest on scientific inquiry.

W. MANCHESTER

PREFACE

THIS essay is an expansion of a paper read in the spring of 1922 to a joint conference of the Anglican and Free Church Fellowships. The book has been written at the desire of those who heard the original paper. In offering to them and to a wider audience a book written in the scanty intervals snatched from a very busy life, I wish I could have made a worthier return for the kind encouragement I received.

I have tried to write for that large body of thoughtful men and women, inside and outside the Church, who, without being specialists in philosophy or psychology, wish to face the difficulties and think out their religion for themselves. An abstruse and technical treatment has been avoided, though I hope I have not been merely superficial. I trust that if what I have written falls into the hands of professed philosophers or psychologists they will bear in mind its purpose and not criticise me too severely for barely touching the fringe of some very large subjects.

After my essay had been set up in type a friendly critic, for whose opinion I have great respect, pointed out to me that whereas I use very vigorous language in describing the low moral standard of parts of the Old Testament (p. 40), there is not the same vigour and explicitness when I come to the positive value

of the Old Testament (pp. 62, 63). Had it been possible, I would have remedied this in the text, for it is likely to give a false impression of my view. My anxiety to put the objector's case as strongly as I could has led me to write with a distribution of emphasis which does not correctly fit what I think is true. I should like to make what correction I can by saying that I hold very firmly to the truth of a unique revelation of God in the Old Testament, a truth which is for me confirmed, not weakened, by the frank recognition of the progressive character of the revelation. The positive religious achievement of the prophets and psalmists is not merely far more impressive than any other pre-Christian religious fact : it is, by contrast with preceding or contemporary religion, so notable that nothing short of a unique inspiration is adequate to explain it.

My essay has a good deal to say about psychology, and unfortunately, but inevitably, most of what I say is adverse criticism. I hasten therefore to meet any suspicion that I have some stupid prejudice against psychology, or that I do not appreciate the solid gains made by modern psychological work. I beg the reader to believe that I have the liveliest sense of the truly wonderful advance which psychology has made in the last twenty-five years and the great contributions it has made to human knowledge. I would not for a moment be taken to mean more than I say. In rejecting certain psychological theories I do not disparage psychology, and I have no sympathy with the belittling language used about the science in certain philosophical quarters.

And of course I do not attribute to all psychoanalysts the religious opinions of Dr Jung, whose position I criticise.

I am conscious that any psychologist who may see my book will probably accuse me of an excessive generality and a failure to appreciate the differences between the various psychological schools of the day. Most psychologists seem to have very decided opinions, and to be very sensitive about the difference between their views and those of other psychologists. They will demand of me a much fuller and more precise discussion. I should like to offer a word or two of defence and explanation to them.

The first reason for the line I have taken is to be found in the definitely limited task which I set myself in writing the book. When I come to discuss the relations between religion and psychology, I have one question only before me, that of *validity*. My purpose has been to make a preliminary distinction—the vitally necessary discrimination between the legitimate fields of theology or philosophy on the one side, and, on the other, of any scientific psychology as such. A brief essay like this, dealing with such grave subjects, can provide no more than prolegomena, suggestions about the nature of the problem and the ways of approaching it. With this restricted purpose in mind, I conceive that I was bound to forego any elaborate description, and adopt some illustrative method only, that the issue might be quite plain and unclouded by more or less irrelevant discussions of purely psychological matters. For I hold, and have argued, that with our modern way of dividing up the

x IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

whole field of intellectual inquiry *any* scientific psychology, no matter what, or indeed any pure science, physical or biological, is incompetent to settle questions of the ultimate validity of our religious ideas. By concentrating on one important book, and for the rest speaking in general terms, it seemed to me that I could best carry out my intention. Whether I have succeeded must be left to the reader to judge.

Secondly, the limitation of my space forbids any exposition of the various psychological theories which would be at all adequate or intelligible to those unversed in the subject. My essay would have to become an elaborate treatise and include a thorough survey of modern psychology of which few men, of whom I certainly am not one, are at present capable. Psychology to-day is a peculiarly difficult and baffling study. A vast literature (of which I have only seen a small part) is being poured out at lightning speed. There are many conflicting tendencies and rival schools. The subject is so wide that there is much specialization on parts of the field, and the specialists work in isolation from each other. As if the theoretical work were not enough, there are all the huge extensions due to the incorporation of applied psychology. The various systems of psycho-therapy, for instance, practised by the Vienna, Zurich, and Nancy schools and their multitudinous offshoots, have added great new wings to an already enormous building. It is extremely difficult, indeed hardly possible, to give any short account of all this: and to present any systematized body of conclusions is quite impossible.

For the differences between psychologists are so fundamental that not only methods and details, but also the very meaning and scope of the science are matters of indecisive and sometimes acrimonious debate among them. The very word 'mental,' which the outside observer might regard as safe in a science called psychology, is enough to start an academic riot. Fired with the doctrine of evolution many psychologists have cast out the notion of 'soul' altogether. Man is treated as a bundle of instincts, apparently because his simian ancestors were creatures of instinct. But that still leaves us with consciousness, and this in its turn has become suspect. Some psychologists, in an ecstasy of biological fervour, have turned their backs on consciousness and staked all on 'behaviour.' There still seems to be a notion in some quarters that we shall get to the real truth about the 'mind' of an Aristotle or an Einstein when we explain everything by their physical reflexes. Such complications justify, I think, the method of my book.

Thirdly, the book contains an appendix which is an integral part of it, and to which I would specially draw the reader's attention. Failing a full discussion in the text, an annotated bibliography seemed to me necessary in order that the reader could, if he wished, pursue the matter for himself. Here I have been very fortunate in getting the collaboration of a fully equipped psychologist, the Rev. Arthur B. Bateman. His short bibliography and commentary are the fruit of profound psychological scholarship, and for his most valuable aid I wish here to express my

warmest thanks and gratitude. I have also to thank him for much valuable criticism of my own essay.

My other obligations are so many that I cannot hope to be aware of them all, still less to acknowledge them. But I cannot deny myself the pleasure of acknowledging some, even at the risk of involuntary injustice. The Bishop of Manchester, by kindly writing the Introduction, has greatly increased a debt of gratitude which I have long owed him, and I cannot adequately thank him. I have received suggestions and criticisms from many kind helpers, some of them not personally known to me: especially I wish to thank my wife, Miss Rosamond Shields, Miss L. V. Southwell, the Rev. Malcolm Spencer, and the Rev. L. W. Grensted, who have read my book in typescript, for much valuable assistance.

My debts to other writers I have been careful to acknowledge in footnotes, where I am aware of them. I wish to express a particularly warm sense of gratitude to the writings of Baron Friedrich von Hügel, the deepest and to me the most helpful living writer on the philosophy of religion.

Suggestions for further study on the scientific side will be found in Mr Bateman's appendix. On the theological side the following short list of books will, I hope, be found useful. No. 7 contains admirable bibliographies.

1. BALFOUR, A. J. . Theism and Humanism.
2. BRADLEY, F. H. . God and the Absolute (in *Essays on Truth and Reality*).
3. BOSANQUET, B. . What Religion Is.
4. BUTLER, C. . . Western Mysticism.

5. CROCE, B. . . . Essence of Æsthetic.
6. GORE, C. . . . Belief in God.
7. HOERNLE, R. F. A. . . . Matter, Life, Mind and God.
8. HÖFFDING, H. . . . Philosophy of Religion.
9. Von HÜGEL, F. . . . Eternal Life.
10. " Mystical Element in Religion.
11. " Essays and Addresses on the
 Philosophy of Religion.
12. INGE, W. R. . . . Christian Mysticism.
13. " Faith and Its Psychology.
14. PRATT, J. B. . . . The Religious Consciousness.
15. STREETER, B. H. . . . Concerning Prayer.
16. " (Editor). . . . The Spirit.
17. TEMPLE, W. . . . Mens Creatrix.
18. " The Nature of Personality.
19. THOULESS, R. H. . . . Introduction to the Psychology
 of Religion.
20. UNDERHILL, E. . . . The Life of the Spirit and the
 Life of To-day.
21. WEBB, C. C. J. . . . Problems in the Relations of God
 and Man.

Many more might be added, and no selection will strike those versed in the vast literature of the philosophy of religion as adequate: every philosopher would doubtless choose a different score of books. Still, a choice must be made, and at least the books here recommended are eminently worth reading.

H. BALMFORTH

REPTON
S. Peter's Day 1923

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER	PAGE v
PREFACE	vii

CHAPTER I

SOME GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN CLAIM	I
--	---

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF DOUBT	13
--------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III

RELIGION AS ILLUSION (I)	23
------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION AS ILLUSION (II)	38
-------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF CHRISTIAN EX- PERIENCE	48
---	----

xvi IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

CHAPTER VI

THE INCONSISTENCIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE	PAGE 58
---	------------

CHAPTER VII

THE CRIMES OF RELIGION	67
--------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VIII

PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION	78
---------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IX

GOD AND THE HUMAN MIND	91
--------------------------------	----

CHAPTER X

THE VERIFICATION OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE	102
--	-----

APPENDIX

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS ON RELIGIOUS PSYCHOLOGY	131
(Contributed by the Rev. A. B. BATEMAN.)	

INDEX	137
-----------------	-----

CHAPTER I

SOME GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN CLAIM

CHRISTIAN experience as a subject for scientific inquiry emerges from the wider field of religious experience in general ; and the discussion of religious experience arouses such acute controversy that some preliminary distinctions must be made. Some critical thinkers have a not unnatural suspicion of the whole appeal to 'experience' in matters of religion. They believe that such an appeal is simply the signal that criticism has given way to feeling, illegitimately dragged in to fill gaps which should be filled, if at all, by thought. Often enough there is some justification for this view. Moreover, 'religious experience' is so vague and comprehensive a term that it seems capable of meaning almost anything : any kind of outlook on life can in some sense be called a 'religion.' It is, therefore, desirable to be as precise as possible and as rational as may be in using so slippery a phrase.

To frame a generally acceptable definition of religious experience is perhaps impossible. The reason for this is twofold. There is, first, the cleavage between those who would assert and those who would deny that the idea of God is essential to religion ;

2 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

and, secondly, even among those who would make religious experience a form of God-consciousness there arise serious differences through the mutually inconsistent views about the nature of the God experienced. For many theists a 'religion' without a living and acting personal God would seem a contradiction in terms; but nature-mysticism, pantheism and deism claim the name of religion and are generally regarded as such. The original Buddhism of Gautama is an even more critical instance. Here is a great system of life and thought which in face of universal usage can hardly be denied the name of a religion, and which yet denies, or at least ignores, any living, superhuman power. Its iron law of cause and effect is the negation of what a theist would recognize as the supreme Reality. Equally remote from Christian or theistic ideas is Mr Bertrand Russell's 'free man's worship' in a mathematical Cloudeuckootown of his own building; nevertheless he speaks of it with an unction which is usually regarded as a peculiar mark of religion. What are we to say of Spinoza? His pantheism excludes transcendence, an essential feature of religion to a Jew, a Mahommedan or a Christian; and his contemporaries, we know, regarded it as 'horrid atheism'; but the *amor intellectualis Dei* and the serene happiness of the old lens-grinder make him far from an irreligious figure.

These few examples sufficiently indicate the wide and intractable variety of content in the idea of religion. At the outset of our inquiry, therefore, it is necessary to define with some care what here

and for our present purpose we shall mean by religious experience and that variety of it which we call Christian experience. In doing so we may seem to be making an ill-omened beginning, by begging a large question. But we need not be merely arbitrary in the relative value we assign to the various types of 'religion.' We can and should work by a scale of values which is rationally defensible on philosophical grounds; notably we shall do well to be guided by the sound Aristotelian canon that the true nature of a thing is to be sought in its developed and perfected form. In no rational scale of values would the cowering fear of the fetish worshipper and the heroic, joyous devotion of a S. Francis of Assisi be put on a level. The human value of S. Francis' experience is infinitely higher, whether or no it is ultimately a valid experience: and since religion is on one side a function of the human mind, such an experience must be graded as the more deeply and richly religious. So, too, an experience (assuming for the moment that it is valid) of a supreme spiritual Being who is personal will reasonably be regarded as more valuable, religiously, than experience solely of the impersonal forces of Nature, whether it be in the crude form of simple-minded animism or the more refined form of philosophical pantheism. We know of no higher category than personality, and even if God be conceived of as super-personal, that cannot mean impersonal. Our classification must take account of this. Again, a religious experience divorced altogether from morality, or moving on a low level of ethical ideals,

4 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

will appear vitiated and impure compared with a religion that incorporates an exalted ethic ; and this because it is intolerable to the normal mind that the supreme Reality should not include all the 'absolute values' of which goodness is one.

It is, then, not unreasonable or arbitrary to assume, as here we shall assume, that in its developed self-realization, which is to say, at its truest and purest, the religious sense claims to apprehend a superhuman, transcendent Reality, with which man has some relation of dependence, for which he has a sentiment of awe and reverence, and which he can serve, love and adore ; a Reality which is regarded by the religious mind as in no sense the creation of man's thought, but as a Given which he apprehends. Furthermore, the religious apprehension claims to be a distinct and autonomous mode of approaching Reality, closely related to philosophy, science, art and morals, but not to be identified with them. Thus, as Professor Webb points out,¹ to say with Matthew Arnold that religion is 'morality touched with emotion' is not to explain and define religion at all. It is merely to be tautologous. For obviously not any and every emotion will do, but only what we mean by religious emotion.

Of religious experience in general Christian experience is a species, differentiated by its specific conception of the Reality apprehended. Christian experience proper depends on man's discovery of God in the personality of Jesus of Nazareth. The idea of God which Jesus derived from the Hebrew

¹ *Problems in the Relation of God and Man*, p. 4.

prophets and His own experience, and which (it is claimed) He revealed in His life and death as well as in His teaching, is the dominant factor in Christian philosophy.¹ Christian experience claims to know a God who is love, light in whom there is no darkness at all; who is immanent as well as transcendent, whose omnipotence is the victorious power of love, and whose working is by the method of love, supremely manifested in the Cross. The transcendent Reality discovered by religious experience in general is by Christian experience interpreted as self-conscious spirit, revealed as creating, redeeming and sanctifying mankind, fulfilling for humanity an eternal purpose of a Divine Kingdom, of which the Church is both the organ and the nucleus, and inviting the willing co-operation of men in the working out of this purpose.

We may venture to assert, without much fear of contradiction, that this is the highest type of religion known to the student of what is quaintly called 'comparative religion.' No nobler or more impressive religious idea is discoverable. If such an experience is valid, it is the supreme goal of human effort and aspiration and the essential meaning of religion.

We have so far been looking at the religious and Christian experience on the side of its object. The statement of that objective content has been brief and summary, because the reader will be familiar with the main features of the Christian idea of God. But the experiential process, as distinct from the

¹ For an exposition of this, see Gore, *Belief in God*.

6 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

object experienced, is yet to be considered, and this is a more formidable task. To express what we mean when we say we experience or apprehend God needs peculiar care, since we cannot exclude mysticism here ; and nowhere is it so fatally easy to mistake words for realities as in dealing with mystical ideas. And of all the elements in religion the mystical is most provocative of widely differing and sharply conflicting opinions among students of religion. Yet the attempt must be made, for without the knowledge *of* God as distinct from knowledge *about* God Christianity would sink back into deism or that legalism and savourless ecclesiasticism against which S. Paul so passionately protested. Wherever Christianity has been a living religion, it has meant personal intercourse with God, deep answering deep in sacraments, prayer, meditation and ' the practice of the presence of God.' No philanthropy, no intellectual conviction of the truth of Christianity as a reasoned philosophy of life, no *esprit de corps* and institutional loyalty can, either separately or in combination, claim to be all that Christianity has meant for its greatest or its most characteristic exponents. It would be more true to say that all these things appear as derivative and dependent, and that communion with God is at once their source and their goal. The first and great commandment is to love God.

We may clear the ground by ruling out a not unnatural misconception to which some psychologists, even eminent ones, seem peculiarly liable. It is frequently supposed that the religious experience is

made up of a great variety of peculiar psychical states, either ecstasy, trance, visions and so forth, or more normally, transient uprushes of emotional exaltation such as sometimes accompany conversion, fervent prayer or corporate religious exercises. On this view 'speaking with tongues' and the like pentecostal phenomena are classical instances of religious experience. 'Religious' experience is an incident sharply distinguished from normal consciousness, and is essentially a kind of nervous excitement, possible to some extent in all human beings, but in any pronounced form found only in certain temperaments.

Undoubtedly much in religious history goes to support this view. There is a famous and startling remark of Tertullian's, 'The majority, almost, of men learn God from visions.' S. Paul is the first of a long line of Christian saints and mystics who have recorded their experience of trance and vision; Moses and Isaiah before him are said to have received revelations by the same means. Indeed, very few of the great religious geniuses of the past seem to have been without visionary experience; and some degree of transport is a common enough episode among religious believers generally. We obviously cannot deny the place of such things in religion. Nevertheless, to confine religious experience to such psychical phenomena is to confuse the thing itself with its by-products. The saints and mystics, despite their own more or less frequent experience of these by-products, make light of them and give warnings against them. They never regard them as

8 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

essential or even as primary. Dr Inge quotes a delightful remark of S. Bonaventura about visions : ' They do not make the saint nor reveal him : otherwise Balaam would have been a saint, and the she-ass that saw the Angel ! '

The religious experience with which we are here concerned, though like all experience it admits of exalted emotional tone, and though it is sometimes accompanied by incidents of abnormal psychical activity, is itself neither an excitement nor an episode. It is something much more extensive, being not an ' extra,' added to the normal experience of life, but a tone or quality of normal experience itself.

A man's religious experience is his experience of life when seen steadily against a spiritual background, viewed, that is, in relation to God and the unseen world. Whatever psychologists and anthropologists between them may discover to be the origin of religion, there can be little doubt that some vague dim consciousness of a beyond, with which man is intimately concerned, will be part of the explanation. More or less developed, it persists as a constant factor in religious evolution, till it reaches the noble heights attained by an Augustine or a Wordsworth. It is a kind of ' awareness ' which seems incapable of further analysis. It claims to be an immediate and intuitive apprehension of really existent ' external ' powers. When the object of this awareness is discerned with sufficient clearness, and its attributes are noble and worthy, we have something that can fitly be called religious experience.

Now this is no momentary illumination under

stress of emotional excitement. On the contrary, it is an undercurrent ruling and shaping the whole of life, and producing on the emotional side a growing peace, unity and joy. A man's religious experience is his *total* experience of life in so far as he is swayed by a genuine belief in God. It depends on the orientation of his purposive activities. If they are in steady dependence on the will of God, his total experience is none the less broadly religious, though he may have no visions or raptures, and may never do what the religious mystic does—vividly realize the presence of God with that uncommunicable but overmastering certainty of felt personal intercourse which turns religious experience into its specifically mystical form. This mystical experience itself is not exceptional. It is found in very many religious people as a more or less occasional and unpredictable happening, and is frequent, for instance, among those whose religion is strongly sacramental. Eucharistic adoration is perhaps the commonest form of mystical awareness. But wherever there is prayer, the mystical experience is not far away.

Christian experience, in the broad sense we have given to it, is practically indistinguishable from faith, if by faith we mean a personal, trustful self-dedication to the will of God as He is revealed in the gospel, the church, reason and conscience. The initial experiment and the ensuing experience are both included under the one simple and comprehensive term—faith. 'Faith,' too, strikes a note which is very necessary, and which might not be caught in the phrase 'religious experience'; for it

makes clear that element of limitation in man's vision of God. We do not and cannot know God fully : the 'unsearchable judgments' of the Eternal are infinitely beyond us. All deeply religious minds have been acutely aware that, though our knowledge of God is sufficient for our needs, we see 'in a glass, darkly.' We shall have to insist upon this point later, but it is important to recognize from the first that a salutary agnosticism is an essential element in Christian experience.

For the sake of clearness, one more point, emerging from what has been said, seems to need a brief discussion before we leave this survey of some essential features of the Christian's claim to a valid experience. We have seen that Christian experience is an experience of contact with God, usually known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in and through the normal experience of life, rising also in certain believers, or perhaps occasionally in nearly all believers, to the mystical experience of a direct and vivid personal communion with God. But, on the Christian hypothesis, the God thus known is of such a character that experience of Him is possible for those who do not believe in the Christian religion, or even in a personal God at all. God is held by Christians to be the Father of all men ; in Him the whole race lives, in continuous dependence on His creative and sustaining power ; every good gift and every perfect gift comes from Him ; Christ, the Word of God, is the light that lighteneth every man coming into the world ; in the great Judgment scene in the gospels Christ accepts some who knew Him not, but whose

lives had been inspired by His spirit of Love. Christians would therefore expect to find experience of God outside their own number. We have gone far from the old patristic theory of diabolical imitation in such matters, and the Christian missionary to-day is a sympathetic student of comparative religion. And it is obvious that fact answers expectation. Undoubtedly there is religious experience beyond the ranks of Christian believers, as valid (if valid at all) as the Christian experience. In some instances—as, for example, among certain saints and mystics of southern India—it is remarkably like the religious experience of Christians.

Moreover, the artist's passion for beauty, the scientist's devotion to research, the philosopher's quest of truth, the reformer's zeal for social justice, are all, from the Christian standpoint, facts of religious experience. For each has to do with the spiritual world of truth and beauty and goodness, whether or no in any given instance there is a conscious realization of God as the ultimate ground of the spiritual ideal.

All this to a Christian is part of the truth of his religion; to the Christian philosopher it must be a very important part, for it is vital for any comprehensive Christian philosophy, as the early Christian philosopher, Justin Martyr, knew. At the same time one must reluctantly admit that it would introduce too much vagueness into our terminology if for the purpose of our present argument we gave the name of Christian experience either to the God-consciousness of those who do not know Christ or to these artistic,

intellectual or practical activities when unaccompanied by an underlying God-consciousness. Unwilling one must indeed be to exclude these types of religious experience: but it will sharpen the issue and give more precision if we distinguish between a broader and a narrower sense of Christian experience, and confine ourselves here to the second. We shall then, in what follows, assume a definite consciousness of God as well as of spiritual ideals, and, moreover, of God in Christ, in the Christian religious experience which is the subject of this essay.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF DOUBT

WE have long ago ceased to regard the 'infidel' as necessarily an unnatural monster. Indeed, we do just the opposite. Disbelief in Christianity is the fashion for 'good Europeans,' those highly civilized, cultured people, often of exemplary, even dull, moral lives, who read the books, buy the pictures, and frequent the concerts and theatres in our great modern cities. To hold the Christian faith, even in a very mild and unecclesiastical form, seems to very many intelligent people (to say nothing of 'intellectuals') a confession of weakness and obsolete mentality needing apology and a decent reticence. To be, let us say, an Anglican clergyman is to be obviously a nincompoop, a figure of fun nearly outworn, but still useful occasionally to provide a light touch of farcical relief in a realistic novel. The manner in which this attitude is expressed will vary from the shrill scolding of an H. G. Wells to the suave and mellow smile of a Havelock Ellis,—*quos honoris causa nomino*. But the attitude is the same. They have 'got beyond Christianity and come out on the other side,' as a very eminent jurist of international reputation once told a friend of the writer's. Nor is this attitude confined to

14 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

the so-called educated classes. Dr Inge has drawn attention to the unexampled lack of popular beliefs and superstitions in the mass of the artisan populations of modern English towns. They seem to have lost completely a side of experience which to their ancestors was rich and vivid.

Yet when once we look at the matter in a cool moment, as free as possible from this dominant herd-suggestion of our time ; when we reflect on the world-wide extension of religion in one form or another, and the incalculably great part it has played in human history, we might well be more surprised than we usually are to see, in a world of European men and women very much like their ancestors in all but superficial things, so many disbelieving that the Christian religion is based in a true experience of a divine Being. What is the explanation ? Religious experience, so universal, so fruitful of impressive results, both good and bad, so irreducible to anything else in man's spiritual activities, might seem fairly secure against all but irrational scepticism. Common sense, it might be expected, would be disposed to accept the reality of God and of our partial knowledge of Him as it accepts the reality of the external world or of beauty and goodness. Why is it that doubts about the validity of religious experience arise so easily and so commonly, that even to religious people they are a continual cause of depression and unhappiness, and that they are among the most serious obstacles to faith for many who are willing and anxious to believe ? The affirmations of the æsthetic and ethical senses present

nothing like the same difficulty. Conscience and the æsthetic perception are not uniform in their pronouncements, and may vary even widely with different civilizations. They may be dull, uneducated or perverted, and these conditions, with their obvious openings for sceptical criticism, introduce serious complications into the philosophy of morals and of art. But—not to go deeper into the matter, which would be out of place here—common sense (like Aristotle) is content with looking to the judgment of the man of practical experience and insight as the test in these matters. Tried by this test, goodness and beauty are not illusory, but have an objective reality which is generally recognized by those who are capable of judging. In a rough and incomplete way the content of this reality is the same for all normally constituted minds. Those who cannot see it are generally ready to admit that they are deficient, and that if they were better equipped they would come to see it for themselves. A flower, a sunset, a child's smile, an act of charity or heroism have the same appeal the world over. No one whose opinion is worth anything doubts that there is beauty in the Parthenon or goodness in the character of Father Damien. Common sense recognizes a Given, an objective Reality which we discover and do not make, in the moral and æsthetic order; and all the theories of knowledge, idealist, realist or pragmatist, however differently they may interpret the Given, have to assume its existence, if knowledge is to be more than illusion and philosophy not simply another name for utter scepticism. We experience beauty

and goodness, and we therefore say, with universal consent, that they exist.

Why, then, is it not enough to say that, because the great majority of men, in practically all ages, countries and civilizations, with whatever dullness, perversion or other imperfection, have experienced God, the existence of God is an assumption which no normally intelligent person can avoid ? Experience, direct or indirect, is, after all, the sole ground for believing in the existence of anything. Of course, there is such a thing as illusion. How we are to distinguish between the real and the illusory in experience at large is a question to which philosophers are still seeking the answer ; but that does not prevent mankind from sleeping well o' nights, because, when faced with scepticism in other spheres than that of religion, they apply with great practical success the old maxim, *solvitur ambulando*. The recurrent demand for a proof of the existence of God, the ease with which doubt afflicts and baffles the natural religious impulse in men, show that the religious consciousness is somehow marked off from other forms of consciousness.

Often enough the causes for this are to be sought in the moral rather than the intellectual life, or in those 'unconscious motives' the omnipresence of which modern psychology has done so much to reveal. Some, again, of modern origin, emerge solely from the disturbance caused by the vast and very rapid expansion of scientific knowledge in the modern world : they are likely to die a natural death with a better comprehension of what the new knowledge

really involves. Thus, the modern view of the Old Testament literature is rapidly ceasing to produce the collapse of religious faith which it seems to have produced frequently fifty years ago. Many people thought that Christianity was proved false because Genesis was shown to contain myth and legend, the book of Jonah to be an allegory, the book of Daniel to be a work of Maccabean times. In the same confused way the theory of evolution, the antiquity and descent of man were somehow supposed to invalidate the belief in God. Such solvents of religious faith, though they are still diligently brought into play by the less reputable type of 'rationalist,' are losing their efficacy. Other and more serious reasons, as every minister of religion in our big cities could testify, are to be found in the economic pressure of modern industrial life. The dust raised by the competitive struggle, the exhaustion of available energy by industry and the myriad distractions of town life, seem to have the effect of blurring the religious sense. Again, the vast output of printed matter, containing almost every conceivable variety of wisdom and folly, bewilders and stuns the minds of those millions who have been taught to read, but not to digest what they read. Acute mental indigestion produces a chronic disability to make up one's mind.

There seems, however, to be a more fundamental cause for the ever-recurring doubt in thoughtful minds about the object of religious experience, a cause which is not peculiar to any one period of culture, but inherent in the conditions of human life as such.

Religious experience is massive and consistent enough to guarantee at least the existence of *some* object of experience. Reflection shows that the data of experience are always subject and object, and we cannot be said to have any experience which is not an experience of something. The undoubted existence of illusion and error does not mean that an experience is possible which has *no* object. Even what is known to be an illusory experience is an experience of something, though the 'something' is not what it is thought to be. A mirage is an experience of real atmospheric conditions. The pink rats which crawl up the legs of a man in delirium tremens have no 'real' existence, though they seem to be 'real' to the sufferer. The real object of his experience is the physical disturbance caused by an overdose of alcohol; he misinterprets his experience, because his disordered nervous system gives him a false image of the reality experienced. 'Real' and 'illusory' experiences have the common element of something experienced.

Accordingly, *some* object of religious experience is not really doubtful. There must be a 'God,' if by 'God' we mean simply the object of religious experience. But there is this peculiarity about the object of a mature religious experience as interpreted by Christians: God must not only be a real existent, He must have two qualities which to the outside observer, conscious of the evil in the world, seem very difficult to combine—omnipotence and goodness. Here is the difficulty to which again and again one finds men recurring, when it is not sin or those un-

conscious motives which are the particular concern of modern psychology that keep them from God, but a sincere intellectual doubt of the truth of religion. They see that neither omnipotence nor goodness can be sacrificed, and yet they feel that the facts of life will not allow them to be reconciled. If God is not the ultimate ground of all things, He is not what we mean by God: and likewise if He is evil or morally neutral He is not what we mean by God. The religious attitude of worship and adoration is impossible with such a being as Mr Wells' 'God the invisible King': religion gives place to a sentimental attachment to an imaginary hero. So, too, his Veiled Being would receive not worship but defiance, hopeless though it might be, from the conscience of humanity.

It seems, therefore, that the question which confronts the human mind in its search for religious truth is often wrongly conceived. The real question is not whether 'God' exists, but what 'God' is. We must ask, not, is there an object of the religious consciousness, but of what sort is it? Is the reality experienced such that the religious sentiment is justified? The difficulty of answering that question seems to be the main obstacle to faith in the modern world.

How are these questions to be answered?

No proof of a coercive kind can be adduced for the Christian answer, if by 'proof' we mean a purely theoretical demonstration such as it is generally supposed we get in mathematics. The demand for such a proof is vain, even irrational, since the subject-

matter does not and cannot admit of such proof. The cogency of mathematical proof depends entirely on its highly abstract and artificial subject-matter. As soon as we emerge from its ' unearthly ballet of bloodless categories ' (to transfer Mr Bradley's phrase) and deal with life in the concrete, we find ourselves unable to work by precise mathematical reasoning. Concrete processes of apprehension, deepening intuition and verification are the only available guides in the larger and by far the most valuable part of life. We can draw an analogy from the arts. No one can ' prove ' the real existence of beauty in Schubert's ' Unfinished ' Symphony by a process of syllogistic reasoning. The only way to the knowledge of that beauty is by experience, by hearing the symphony performed. If anyone chooses to deny that there is beauty which can be known by means of vibrating catgut and iron wire, we cannot ' prove ' that he is wrong: we can only ask him to listen to a violin sonata. He must act on the assumption that beauty can be so known, mysterious as the matter is. *Æsthetic* experiment, issuing in *æsthetic* experience, leads to an experimental certainty of real beauty, and this is the only way of attaining that certainty.

The fundamental questions of religion meet us with a similar challenge.

The only satisfactory answer to these questions is to be found, if at all, in religious experience. That perfect synthesis of knowledge which is the metaphysical ideal can only be reached by man under conditions of mental expansion which would remove him into quite another category of being. The

function of faith, or religious experience, is to give him that assurance which philosophy by its own nature can never give. If Christian experience is not an illusory experience, so far as it goes, then, despite the intellectual difficulties, God is both almighty and good. The work of the Christian philosopher is not to claim complete metaphysical truth, but to combine the intellectual quest with the experimental activity of faith.¹

But what if the Christian experience can be shown by science to be illusory? We have been told in the past that it can; we are told so again to-day, and that with a greater confidence than ever before. From time to time new difficulties meet the religious man, as knowledge, by its mere growth and elaboration, presents new and unfamiliar material to be wrought into a provisional synthesis. Such difficulties have arisen in the past with new discoveries in astronomy, geology and biology. These have varied in their intensity, in proportion as they attack the outworks or the inner defences of religion. At the present day new problems of hitherto unrivalled intensity are arising from the comparatively


¹ It must be observed that it is not only a theistic world-view which is faced with unsolved problems. The problems of freedom and determination, of time, space and infinity, of unity and plurality, present any arguable theory with antinomies at present irreducible. That the problem of evil admits of a *partial* solution, with a high degree of probability, I do not doubt. It seems to me impossible, for instance, to deny a limited freedom to man, whence it follows that a choice of moral evil must be possible: and similarly we may hold that the possibility of physical evil is necessarily implied in an orderly universe with invariable sequences on which man can rely and so control nature.

new sciences of analytical psychology and comparative religion. It is being claimed that the results so far obtained by these modern studies require a radical revaluation of religion, since they show it to be explicable as a purely human creation. No hypothesis of a non-human element is needed. The experience claimed of a divine Reality is simply illusion. The very citadel of religion is boldly attacked. For now it is not the circumvallation of creeds and explicit doctrines which is assailed. On the basis of the new discoveries it is asserted that the experimental ground of religion, the deep intuitions and aspirations of the human heart, can now for the first time be shown to be the delusion of the mind turning in upon itself. We are at last fairly face to face with what has been rightly called the fundamental problem of religion—whether it be a communion with man's subconscious self, or with a Power beyond and above, though at the same time within man. These reinforcements of what may be called the 'natural' doubt discussed in this chapter we must now go on to consider.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION AS ILLUSION (1)

TWENTY years ago William James published his *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Ever since, the bearing of psychology on religion has been in the front rank of intellectual interest. William James marks an epoch in psychological history, and here, no less than in other departments of his work, he has given the lead to later workers, and has swayed the currents of thought. It was a moral certainty that before long, what is called the Freudian Psychology, the best known and probably the most important part of the 'New Psychology,' would turn its attention to religion, and have its say about religious experience with the rest. Beginning with hysteria and the neuroses, it quickly extended into normal psychology and investigated behaviour in general; the further extension to the folk-mind, with its expression in folk-lore myth and religion was inevitable. The rapid development of two other sciences gave the psychologist his opportunity. Anthropology and Comparative Religion provide a vast body of data, collected from every quarter of the world, and throwing abundant light on the religious experiences and beliefs of men of every kind of culture. No more fascinating work has appeared for many years than



Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough*, with its dazzling panorama of human experience. To these data, offering so tempting a field for investigation, psychological analysis is being directed with great zest and remarkable results. Conclusions are being reached which are said to destroy the whole basis of supernatural religion, and relegate it to the limbo of obsolete superstitions. It is freely asserted that psychological science can now show from within that religious experience is nothing more than the subjective experience of certain temperaments and of men at certain levels of culture, testifying to nothing but the objectified fancies of the experiencing mind. Varying explanations are given, derived from the different psychological schools, of how precisely this illusion of contact with God has arisen. Dream phantasy in the race or the individual; the objectifying of subconscious desires; the influence of mass-suggestion; auto-suggestion, aided sometimes in abnormal cases by visual or auditory hallucination; with these and the like formulæ we are assured all the phenomena of religious experience can be adequately explained.

Other objectors to religion, as we shall see later, have striven to prove its illusory character indirectly, by dwelling, with the post-Kantian agnostic, on the supposed incapacity of the human mind to know the Supreme Reality or by pointing to the inconsistencies and immoralities of religious men. They have rather suggested the need of a positive explanation of the fact of religion, alternative to the hypothesis of a valid experience of God, than supplied such a positive

theory. The new psychology, in certain hands, claims to provide a direct disproof of the religious hypothesis, by giving a positive and complete explanation of religion which cuts off the hypothesis of God as superfluous: William of Occam's famous razor, 'entia non multiplicanda sunt præter necessitatem,' is brandished in the face of religion. What should have been recognized as self-made symbols of the herd-subconsciousness have masqueraded as truths about reality: phantasy has taken the place of scientific thought: and the process can everywhere be observed in the religious history of the race. An effective illustration is provided by Miss Jane Harrison, the well-known Cambridge scholar, who has recently applied these views brilliantly to her chosen department of ancient religion in her *Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*.

Of the two most prominent leaders of the new psychological schools, Dr Freud has made excursions on to anthropological ground in his *Totem and Tabu* and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*.¹ But perhaps more relevant to our immediate purpose is Dr Jung's *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*, translated into English in 1916 under the title of *The Psychology of the Unconscious*. In this work Christianity appears with other historic theologies as a product of racial day-dreams, and the psychological argument for the illusion theory is presented

¹ In *Totem and Tabu* Freud sees in the 'Œdipus complex' the clue to the workings of the folk-mind. In *Group Psychology* he attacks the theories of the social instincts put forward by such writers as Le Bon, McDougall and Trotter, and further develops his own theory.

with great analytical elaboration. The book is based on a psychological publication by an American lady, Miss Miller, in which she records a number of phantasies of her own, ('*Quelques faits d'imagination créatrice subconsciente*,' *Archives de Psychologie*, vol. v., 1906). It is by applying the methods of psycho-analysis to this curious document that Jung is led to explain myths and religions as naïve and pathetic transformations of the 'life-force' (*libido*).

The main ideas of the Freudian psychology, and the general principles of psycho-analytical procedure are by this time so generally known and so easily accessible in a rapidly growing popular literature that they need not be stated again here. But, in view of the serious difference between the leaders, it is perhaps worth while to remind the reader that the important concept, the *libido*, is by Jung understood in a much wider sense than that of Freud. Freud persists in his view that the *libido* is sexual in character, though it is true that he gives 'sexual' a wider meaning than it usually bears. Jung has given to the *libido* a more philosophical content. For him it is comparable to Bergson's *élan vital* or Schopenhauer's Will, the life-force or 'cosmic urge' of which the sexual impulse is but one channel. He insists that sexuality is enormously underrated, and that it is a most important channel of *libido*: but it is not the exclusive channel.¹

It is difficult to give any brief account of Jung's

¹ I do not attempt here any complete statement of the difference between Freud and Jung. For this see the Appendix, containing a bibliography by a thoroughly well-equipped psychologist. As

obscure and complicated treatise, but in view of its importance the attempt must be made.

The analysts' investigations of the psychic life have led them to see in phantasy-making an extraordinarily important and practically universal activity of our minds, not only among children, where it has long been recognized, but also among adults. Much of this is unconscious, and the nightly dream is but the most fully unconscious product of phantasy-making. Jung therefore begins his work by distinguishing two types of thinking—dream or phantasy thinking on the one hand, and directed thinking on the other. Directed thinking, or logical reasoning, is the scientific activity by which the human mind 'deals with novel data' (as William James expressed it), produces scientific knowledge of the real world, and applies that knowledge in technical processes. It is directed wholly to the outside world, and has for its object adaptation to environment. It is 'the manifest instrument of culture,' and is of modern growth. It gives us 'a practical application of the human mind to which we owe modern empiricism and technic, and which occurs for absolutely the first time in the history of the world' (*op. cit.*, pp. 19-20). This modernity of the capacity for directed thinking is extremely important when we come to examine the development of myths and religions. For 'the ancients almost entirely, with the exception of a few extraordinary minds, lacked . . . training in

I understand the matter, their difference goes right back to their ideas of the relation between the conscious and the unconscious, and of the nature of the unconscious.

directed thinking,' and 'it is to be assumed that the directed thinking of our time is a more or less modern acquisition which was lacking in earlier times' (*ib.*, p. 20). What took the place of directed thinking in the past, and what still is the ordinary method of thought for most people, is the thinking which William James called 'merely associative,' a passive, dreamy state in which we allow a series of images to follow one another by simple association of ideas. This 'phantasy-thinking' is not the difficult labour of reasoning, it does not tire us, but comes easily. The most important feature of it is that it *turns away* from reality into dream products. Directed thinking 'creates innovations, adaptations, imitates reality and seeks to act upon it': dream- or phantasy-thinking 'turns away from reality, sets free subjective wishes, and is, in regard to adaptation, wholly unproductive' (*ib.*, p. 22). Mediæval scholasticism, midway between the ancients and the moderns, was a useful gymnastic of directed thinking, the fruits of which we are reaping to-day; but it was employed on phantasy material, not aimed at a visible transformation of reality: and when we go further back, we find that, though the intellectual capacity of the ancients was not less than ours, their lack of education in directed thinking, that precise and concrete manner of thinking characteristic of modern science, had the vitally important result that they created not science, but mythology. The mental activity of the ancient world was in a realm of phantasies, little concerned with the outer course of things. The ancients lived in the infantile state of mind, and their phantastical,

mythological thinking is parallel to the similar thinking of children and the lower races. Indeed, the physiological recapitulation of racial history which marks the development of the human embryo is paralleled in psychology. 'The state of infantile thinking in the child's psychic life, as well as in dreams, is nothing but a re-echo of the prehistoric and the ancient' (*op. cit.*, p. 28).

We are now ready to take an easy step forward. The Freudian investigation of the dream showed that in dreams repressed subconscious wishes find satisfaction in symbolic form.¹ What is the myth but the dream of the people? Jung (p. 29) quotes Freud's conclusion: 'It is probable that the myths correspond to the distorted residue of wish phantasies of whole nations, the secularized dreams of young humanity.'² Dr Abraham, in *Dreams and Myths*, comes to the same conclusion: 'The myth is a fragment of the infantile soul-life of the people.'³ What the dream is to the individual, the myth is to the group. It has precisely the same psychological origin, the symbolic expression of suppressed desires, and precisely the same fictitious character. Theological and metaphysical ideas, it seems, are not reasoned attempts at explaining facts, nor do they originate in directed thinking at all, but with or without some basis in legend, which is distorted history, are simply the dream-thinking of the herd. And if we ask at this

¹ Vide Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*.

² Quoted from Freud, *Sammlung kleiner Schriften zur Neurosenlehre*, Pt. II., p. 205.

³ Quoted by Jung, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

stage whether Christianity is mythology, Jung's answer is unhesitating. From top to bottom, from the Incarnation through the mystery religions to the most elementary folk-lore and sex rituals of primitive peoples, the same process has been at work. Christianity is but one of the phantasy creations, Christ a wish-figure like Osiris or Mithras. No distinction is allowed between the 'Christian mythology' and others in point of origin or validity. On this subject there is a curiously illuminating passage in the first chapter (*op. cit.*, p. 30): 'Has humanity at all ever broken loose from the myths? Every man has eyes and all his senses to perceive that the world is dead, cold and unending, and he has never yet seen a God, nor brought to light the existence of such from empirical necessity. On the contrary, there was need of a phantastic, indestructible optimism, and one far removed from all sense of reality, in order, for example, to discover in the shameful death of Christ really the highest salvation and the redemption of the world. Thus one can indeed withhold from a child the substance of early myths, but not take from him the need for mythology. One can say that should it happen that all traditions in the world were cut off with a single blow, then with the succeeding generations the whole mythology and history of religion would start over again. Only a few individuals succeed in throwing off mythology in a time of a certain intellectual supremacy—the mass never frees itself. Explanations are of no avail; they merely destroy a transitory form of manifestation, but not the creating impulse.'

Having thus established to his own satisfaction that Christianity and religion in general are phantastic forms produced by unconscious activity of the *libido*, Jung proceeds to his main task of following the genesis of myths in the disguised erotic wishes revealed by psycho-analysis in the Miller phantasies. We cannot follow him through the confused and overloaded discussion of these phantasies, complicated still further by many suggestive digressions. But it is instructive to extricate the conclusions which are most significant for our present purpose, conclusions reached by the usual eccentricities of symbolic interpretation, and to see the light which, incidentally, they are supposed to throw on the Christian faith. These conclusions seem to admit of being summarized under five heads.

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE NOTION OF GOD

The idea of a paternal Deity is reached by paths of unconscious transformation familiar to the psychoanalyst in his treatment of individuals. Reference has already been made to the two fundamental movements of psychic life—the one outwards towards reality (extroversion), the other inwards towards phantasy, dreaming and the like absorption in self-manufactured figments (introversion). Character is determined by the relative preponderance of one or other of these forces in the soul. The introverted type is always awakening what are found by analysis to be infantile reminiscences associated with the parents. The parents are the most important of all

influences that come out of the past, and they mould personality, because, being the first and most absorbing objects of interest, they naturally form the model for later efforts. Indeed, so important are they that the psycho-analyst sees centred round them the root complex¹ which is the determining factor in the difficulties of later life. When some desire arises which is suppressed, or some obstacle occurs from which the individual shrinks, *libido* flows backward and forces itself out in phantastic form, using as material for its compensatory phantasy the situations and experiences of childhood. Such a resuscitation of the father-image derived from the past is to be seen in the belief in God. 'The idea of the masculine creative Deity is a derivation, analytically and historically psychologic, of the "Father-*imago*," and aims, above all, to replace the discarded infantile father-transference in such a way that for the individual the passing from the narrow circle of the family into the wider circle of human society may be simpler or made easier' (*op. cit.*, p. 95). God is simply our own longing masquerading under a symbolic cloak derived from our childish dependence on our fathers. 'The gods *are libido*,' says Jung bluntly. So we get a definition of religion. '*In religion the regressive reanimation of the father-and-mother imago is organized into a system.*' The benefits of religion are the benefits

¹ The 'Œdipus' complex, with its complement the 'Electra' complex. The names, which were invented by Dr Freud, were, of course, chosen because in the one legend Œdipus killed his father and married his mother, and in the other Electra avenged her father's murder by conspiring with her brother to kill their mother, the murderess.

of parental hands: its protection and its peace are the results of parental care upon the child; its mystic feelings are the unconscious memories of the tender emotions of the first childhood' (*op. cit.*, p. 99: Jung's italics).

II. THE 'CHRIST-MYTH'

The divine hero is as easily traced back to the *libido* itself. A regular symbol of the *libido* is the sun. 'The visible father of the world is . . . the sun, the heavenly fire: therefore God, Sun, Fire are mythologically synonymous' (*op. cit.*, p. 99). A closely-related symbol of the creative energy of the *libido* is the phallus, and the sun itself is a phallic symbol. It is easy, therefore, to identify the divine fertilizing energy of the sun and the reproductive energy of the mysterious male organ of generation. Sun worships and phallic worships are, of course, world-wide. An inevitable result of this combination is the 'old buried idol, the youthful, beautiful, fire-encircled and halo-crowned sun-hero, who, forever unattainable to the mortal, wanders upon the earth, causing night to follow day; winter, summer; death, life; and who returns again in rejuvenated splendour and gives light to new generations' (*op. cit.*, p. 115). So we find the ancient Asiatic folk-myth of a dying and rising God or hero reappearing in various forms, now as an Osiris, a Tammuz or an Atthis, now a Christ or a Mithras; and this old phantasy product concentrated its varied manifestations in the Christ-myth. These heroes and their typical fates are personifications of the human *libido* and its typical

34 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

fates, 'the actors and interpreters of our secret thoughts.' Christ and Mithras, we are assured, are unmistakable sun gods, the divine hero being but an astrological variant of the Father God. Of an historical Jesus we are told with oracular brevity that we know nothing, and His religious value is 'partly Talmudic, partly Hellenic wisdom' (*op. cit.*, p. 259).

III. PRAYER

God and Christ being thus eliminated from reality, the conscious relationship between man and these fictions is, of course, itself fictitious. The meaning of prayer is to be found in the direction of the *libido* towards the unconscious complex. In prayer we are simply chasing our own (imaginary) tails.

IV. CHRISTIANITY

What, then, is the truth about Christianity? It emerges from the psychological situation of the early Roman empire, and is created by that situation. Christianity is 'the negative of the ancient sexual cult' (*op. cit.*, p. 257; cp. p. 78). The moral degeneracy of the first century produced a moral reaction against the 'whirlwinds of the unchained *libido* which roared through the ancient Rome of the Cæsars' (*ib.*, p. 80). The modern man represses his animal nature and becomes neurotic: the first century Christians found a means of sublimation by unconsciously recasting the erotic conflict into religious activity (cp. *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 257, *seqq.*). They made

an energetic regression to the infantile, to escape 'the visible storms of wickedness,' the licentiousness and the brutality of their environment. So the Christian religion fulfilled an important biological purpose in saving the race from destruction by libidinous dissipations: the return of licentiousness in modern cities, Jung believes, is due to the breakdown of the Christian system (*vide* p. 258). But we cannot go back to Christianity on that account. The interposition of infantile symbols between the *libido* and its sublimation is sentimental and ethically worthless, because, as we have seen, the content of Christianity is precisely on the same level of reality as Mithraism. The solution of the problem must be sought elsewhere.

V. THE GOAL OF MORAL AUTONOMY

Jung has a gospel of his own to take the place of religion—moral autonomy based on psychological knowledge. Religious beliefs, being simply the work of the unconscious, transforming into symbols the 'incest wish' (*i.e.* the regression to infantilism, compelled by the 'censor,' the fence between the unconscious and the conscious levels of the mind, to take refuge in symbols from the abhorrent incestuous desire for the parents) are ethically demoralizing, because infantile; they are, of course, the merest self-deception for the man acquainted with the psychological facts. Therefore the relationship between morality and religion must be severed. But the simple negation of the symbol will not serve. The conflict between social and moral requirements, on

the one side, and animal impulses, on the other, leaves us still the task of sublimation. We must perform that task without recourse to the religious symbol, replacing belief by understanding. So we shall attain to the goal of moral autonomy. We are brought back, it seems, to the Socratic paradox that virtue is knowledge. Once we have realized in full consciousness what the psychological facts are, and how the conflict in the soul may be overcome by providing morally acceptable channels for our unruly energies, inner harmony will follow, and the triumphant psycho-analyst will have the satisfaction of hearing the race he has redeemed chanting Henley's famous lines with the full assurance of those who stand on a firm scientific basis.

The reader will perceive from this brief sketch of the eminent psychologist's views that a new problem of great importance has arisen for the Christian apologist. We had heard before that the Church's Christ was but another mystery-figure, a Saviour God of the type common (so it is alleged)¹ in what Reitzenstein has called the 'Hellenistic theology,' that cosmopolitan jumble of theosophical or gnostic beliefs which was widespread over the civilized world when Christianity arose. The novelty is not here, but in the adoption of this view by an authoritative exponent of psychology, as fitting the recently discovered psychological facts. Much, no doubt, remains to be done before his brilliant theory of the origin of myths can be regarded as scientifically established ;

¹ For the uncritical character of this assumption, see Bevan, *Hellenism and Christianity*, pp. 89-108.

but it seems to be strongly based, and it cannot be disregarded. Christianity is certainly a historical religion, arising in a particular human environment: it has undoubted resemblances to other religions which arose in, broadly, the same cultural period: it was at its beginning in marked antagonism to the exaggerated sexuality of its surroundings. Is it the fact that in this new psychological theory—which, if successful, shows that religious experience *is* illusory—we have the positive argument needed to supplement the negative argument, showing that religious experience *cannot* be valid, of other and more familiar objections to religion? Before we attempt a provisional answer to this question we must complete our survey by summarizing these other objections.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION AS ILLUSION (II)

IN this chapter we have to make a brief general survey of the various types of objection that can be and are made against the validity of that experience we call religious. No better guide can be found than Baron Friedrich von Hügel, who in his recent work, *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, has two most valuable papers on this subject. In what follows we shall be largely indebted to these impressive fruits of his vast reading and ripe wisdom.

Following von Hügel, then, we may group the difficulties that cast doubt on religious experience under three heads which seem to be exhaustive. First, there are the problems suggested by the variety in the objects alleged to be known in religious experience; secondly, there are those produced by the historical evils of many kinds which have resulted from belief in the supernatural; and thirdly, there are those emerging from the limitations, real or supposed, of the experiencing mind. The first set are brought to light by the discoveries of comparative religion and psychology; the second are writ large over the history of religion and religious bodies; the third depend on certain psychological and epistemological theories. We must now investigate each of these

groups, and endeavour to get a comprehensive view of their real import.

I

First, then, there is the great variety and inconsistency in the affirmations of the religious consciousness, far greater than even the medley presented by such writers as Leuba, Starbuck or William James, the last of whom, in his famous Gifford Lectures on 'The Varieties of Religious Experience,' gave us a psychological classic. The student of comparative religion and of psychology, while he certainly finds many resemblances in religious phenomena,—experiences rites and beliefs surprisingly similar among peoples widely sundered from one another in space and time and culture,—meets also endless variations, many of them mutually inconsistent and contradictory. And not only are the data presented by the God-consciousness thus at variance one with the other when several different religions are compared. We find also the adherents of a single religion holding incompatible beliefs. Religious experiences, again, claiming truth for themselves have been in flat contradiction of other truths, whether it be the moral law or well-based conclusions of philosophers and scientists; which would seem to present us with the dilemma that either the religion or the scientific and moral truths were to be denied. And the confusion is complete when we remember that religion insists, as it must, on a God who is to be the source not only of specifically religious experience, but also of those very truths (as we now see them to be) of philosophy and

science which the representatives of religion have fought, with or without the sinister aid of the 'secular arm.'

It is hardly possible to avoid the suspicion that much, even most, of religious experience is simply a department of psychical pathology, a jungle of rank growths writhing in a miasma of credulous fear and desperate guesswork, which only the light of science can disperse.

Material for illustrating this feature of religion is abundant, but we need not go further than the Bible, admittedly a classical document of religious experience. The contradictions about the supposed object of the experience are there displayed quite plainly. The people for whom a unique religious gift is claimed are at first not far removed from a horde of superstitious savages, whose religion impels them to exterminate whole tribes of their own stock. The saints and leaders of this people of God, such men as Abraham, Jacob or David, are frankly polygamous, treacherous or murderous. Inspired bards and prophets are led to utter language fiercely vindictive and immoral. The ark of the covenant can blast a wholly innocent man like any West African savage's ju-ju. The prophet of Yahweh curses a king who has omitted to make a massacre complete, and repairs the oversight himself by cold-blooded murder. The central figure of Hebrew history, Moses, is represented as guilty of murder, swindling, and, in the horrible story of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, of a magical exploit of fiendish barbarity. Yahweh himself is said to tempt to evil as well as to attract to good, to send

'lying spirits' to prophets, to revenge himself with bloodthirsty fury. Material prosperity is said to be the reward of the righteous, and the life after death is the woeful and shadowy existence of Sheol.

These flagrant contradictions of the demands both of religious consistency and of the moral consciousness are paralleled by similar contradictions in the realms of science and philosophy. The reign of law and the rational principle of the uniformity of Nature are conceived of as the expression of God's will : yet some miracles, such as those of Moses, Joshua, Elisha and others, are apparently in flat opposition to natural law. The Creation story, put forward as divinely inspired truth, seems to contradict the undoubted discoveries of geology and biology. The anthropomorphic God, again, seems irreconcilable with the limitations which philosophers and psychologists contend are a necessary implication of the notion of personality. In face of such moral and intellectual inadequacy, what value can we allow to the boasted experience of supreme Holiness and Truth ?

These Old Testament difficulties, the critic might continue, stultify not only the loftiest pre-Christian religion, but also the 'supreme' religion, Christianity itself, which adopted wholesale the Jewish Scriptures, as, at least, a record of a true religious experience in a religiously gifted people, and indeed is bound to do so. For Christianity claims to be the heir to the promises made to the chosen people, the true Israel by direct continuity. A dilemma is presented to us. Either the religious experience of the Hebrews must be counted valid by the Christian, or he must cut away

the ground from under his own feet, and commit intellectual suicide. Moreover, Christianity itself is notoriously full of contradictions. What can be more remote than the religious experiences of a South Italian peasant and a Plymouth Brother ? Have not some sections of Christians denounced others as Anti-christ, the whore of Babylon and other diabolical things, alleging actually that the religion of these reprobates was the negation of Christianity ? Who will reconcile Anglo-Catholic and Kensitite, Roman and Strict Baptist, Harnack and the Loisy of Modernist days ? The farrago of creeds could be specified to the point of weariness, but no more need be said. The state of affairs is obvious to all.

II

Another closely allied group of objections to the validity of religious experience, with its claim to know supreme and unchanging Holiness, dwells on the effects on social well-being of supernatural religion, which, it is alleged, has largely ignored or tried to tyrannize over wholesome and legitimate human activities. Wherever we look among the higher organized religions (to say nothing of more primitive types) there is evidence of narrow-minded obscurantism and other anti-social ignorances, follies and crimes, not merely proceeding from men who happen to be religious, but caused by their religion. Human sacrifice, the fires of Moloch, temple prostitution, devil-terrors and grovelling fears of all kinds are hideous inhumanities of primitive superstition which

have not left themselves without a progeny in the more advanced religions to vex mankind and bar its progress. Religious intolerance has been one of the greatest scourges in history. Jewish fanaticism fought against art and Hellenism. The Mohammedans burnt down the great library of Alexandria on religious grounds. Most important of all, Christendom has to answer for a long tale of sins against the advancing spirit of enlightenment. The death penalty for the heretic, however conscientious and upright, was first imposed in the fourth century, to become terribly frequent against the Albigenses, and an organized part of social machinery under the Inquisition. Short of the cruel death at the stake, torture, imprisonment and confiscation were freely employed. 'Religious' wars occupy much of the historian's time, and in France, Germany and the Netherlands there was plenty to give sting to Montaigne's quiet irony, 'It is setting a high value on one's opinions to roast men on account of them.' Protestants and Anglicans were as culpable as Roman Catholics. Luther had no mercy for Anabaptists, nor Calvin for Servetus. Three or four persons were burnt at Norwich in Elizabeth's reign for unchristian opinions, and at Tyburn and elsewhere numbers of Roman priests suffered death for their faith. Roger Bacon, Bruno, Copernicus, Galileo made courageous efforts to correct scientific error and establish truth; they all met ecclesiastical censure: and none can read the story of religion's relations to science without shame and sorrow. How is it possible, we are asked, to reconcile a valid experience of supreme Wisdom and Goodness with all this

44 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

criminal folly done in the name of that supreme Reality ? Is it not a sufficient indictment of super-human religion to point to its history and its fruits ?
Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.

III

Lastly we come to the objections based on the supposed character of the apprehending mind. We have already seen how the modern psychologist finds everywhere in religion the phantasy, a subconscious or unconscious withdrawing into the easy satisfaction of unfulfilled desires and impulses by means of image-making uncontrolled by fact or reality. And that seems to fit in very well with the doubts felt by philosophical agnosticism of the post-Kantian type. These doubts may be briefly stated in the question, How is it possible for the human mind to apprehend anything except sense-data and the forms or categories which the mind itself inevitably employs in cognition ? We have no sense perception of God ; and God is not taken to be something in our minds. It would seem, therefore, that we have somehow to perform an impossible feat and get outside our own skins if we are to know God. Moreover, what we know of the mind always reveals it as essentially contingent and finite. Even assuming that we could get outside ourselves, could we then be any more likely to know what is *ex hypothesi* absolute and infinite ? The field of possible human experience must be bounded by the nature of the human mind. It can know itself, it can infer the existence of other minds analogous to its

own, and it can know the world of phenomena which is amenable to its cognitive operations. But an Infinite Mind is an imaginative construction beyond verification ; and God must therefore be either an optimistic equivalent for the Unknowable or, as Feuerbach and others after him have maintained, an objectification of man's own consciousness. Personality, too, as applied to God seems to involve us in contradiction ; for what we know of human personality shows that distinction from others, and so limitation, is of the very essence of personality. Therefore, from the point of view of this type of criticism, the modern psychological contention that, as a matter of observation, the human mind actually *does* make gods in its own image comes aptly to confirm the older philosophical argument, based on an earlier psychology of cognitive process, that it *can* do nothing else, because of its inherent limitations. What, once more, is the worth of religion's claim to know an absolute and ultimate Reality ?

We have now completed our very sketchy and rapid survey of what to-day are perhaps the most serious difficulties confronting those who believe that Christian faith is in touch with Reality and is not simply illusion. A brief retrospect may be useful at this point.

After noticing that the religious consciousness must have some object, but that there will always be difficulties in thinking of that object as the Christian God, we took a fixed point in Jung's phantasy-theory of religion, with which the new psychology enters the lists against the reality of religion. In order to realize better the weight of this theory, we then noted in a

summary way the main heads of objection which can be raised without calling in the newer psychological work. The sceptical agnostic had already handled the psychological fact of the religious consciousness ; he had found it suspiciously full of inconsistencies ; he had noted its anti-social products ; especially he had, in his more philosophical moments, doubted whether the human mind, as he analysed it and traced its history, gave him any reason for supposing either that knowledge of an Infinite Personal Mind was humanly possible, or that the notion of an Infinite Personal Mind was intelligible. It is against this background of psychological and philosophical preparation that the Freudian can throw his explanation of myth and religion.

We cannot doubt that the attack is serious. It is the third wave of the scientific challenge to religious faith, and it is probably the most difficult to meet. The first attack, that of the physicists and geologists, was comparatively trivial ; the second, that of the biologists, was much more formidable, and is not yet entirely overcome ; the third, the psychological, is the most searching of all. We have taken Jung as our type of the psychological critic because of his eminence and intrinsic importance. But, of course, his is not the only spear-point directed against the religious view, nor do his weapons exhaust the psychologist's armoury.

Auto-suggestion and mob-suggestion, to which Leuba and others have turned for an explanation of religion, are potent forces which may act in other ways than that so skilfully traced by the psycho-

analyst in his illuminating parallel of the dream and the myth. Those who wish to get at the voluminous and not always easily accessible literature in which the full range of modern psychological doctrine is displayed, so far as it bears on our problem, will find help in the Appendix to this volume. Here we cannot look down all the avenues. It would need many volumes, and far more knowledge and ability than the present writer can claim, to cover the whole ground. We must, of necessity, content ourselves with the typical and important example afforded by Jung, shown up against the background of general objections which we have outlined, and in the remainder of this essay proceed with a tentative sketch of a line of reply.

CHAPTER V

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

ONE preliminary point must be discussed before we proceed to consider the objections raised against the validity of Christian experience. Where does the burden of proof lie in this matter? We must ask whether the experience in itself, and apart from these objections, has any positive evidential value to be set against them. Does the experience of God claimed by religious persons come with any recommendations, which should dispose us to accept it as true, if the objections could be removed? Most important of all, can it claim to be on all fours with truth-giving experience in other spheres, especially those where scientific method has won acceptance for the results reached? Or does it come as simply an irrational feeling, bearing in itself the marks of delusion or imposture?

In our second chapter we have already noticed the fact that the existence of the religious consciousness, so typical of man throughout his history, is itself sufficient to guarantee some object to which it is directed, whether that object be God or some mysterious life-force within us which we objectify. All experience implies an object of some kind. We

cannot here discuss the philosophical problem of error: but whatever the solution of that problem may be, it at least seems clear that illusory experience is not marked off from experience which is what it claims to be by the absence of any object whatever. I put my walking-stick into a pool of water, and it appears to be bent. I have an illusory experience. For good reasons I am confident that the mere immersion of a straight stick in water does not really bend the stick, and that as a matter of fact it remains straight. But the fact that my experience of bentness is erroneous does not mean that there has been no contact with the 'outside' world. I have had experience of an actual factor in reality—the behaviour of light.

Similarly, a Christian's religious awareness brings him, the subject, into relation with an object, the spiritual background (whatever it may be) which he discerns behind the veil of phenomena. He claims that the object is what he means by God. Modern psychology since James would admit the reality of the experience, namely, that it is an experience of a real object: but some psychologists interpret the object as really the *libido* (or whatever it may be) and not God. They would assert that, in terms of our walking-stick experiment, God, the Christian interpretation, corresponds to the bentness of the stick, and the working of the *libido*, their psychological interpretation, corresponds to the actual behaviour of light.

Which interpretation has *prima facie* the balance of probability in its favour? The psychologist is in

a strong position. He would make his appeal to science, and to the gigantic triumphs of the sciences. He would claim that he too is a scientist, using the assured methods of scientific research, and therefore likely to reach a conclusion which is scientifically true. The value of this claim we shall have to consider later. At present we have to ask whether on the side of religion any similar claim can be made. For religion too will be in a very strong position if we can show that in the procedures by which century after century men have attained the Christian interpretation, and held it fast, there is a marked scientific quality. Is there any common ground between these procedures and the logic of science ?

It is true that the affirmation of God is not usually reached in precisely the same way as that in which science reaches its affirmations.¹ The characteristic road to religious faith is not a detailed intellectual process of research, at the end of which the seeker draws certain conclusions. Science works by this inductive method : it scrapes together with exquisite care what it considers to be sufficient facts before it moves to its generalizations. If faith and a theistic philosophy were identical, no doubt this would be the method of faith. But all men need, and can exercise, faith, and not all men can be theistic philosophers. Faith is rather a condition of life, a reaction of the total, unified personality to God in Christ, an experience following an experimental venture, than an intellectual process

¹ I am indebted for part of my argument here to a lecture by the Rev. Father Waggett, D.D., S.S.J.E., *The Nature and Interests of Faith*.

of the typically scientific order. It stands in relation to intellectual activity as whole to part. But, in saying that, we assert that there is an intellectual ingredient in faith : it can be regarded as a mode of knowledge. And in its intellectual procedure, when that becomes explicit, faith very markedly follows the method of science. It may seem paradoxical to say that the *foi du charbonnier* is implicitly scientific ; but it is nevertheless true. If in religion we have a body of authoritative information given by the experts, with freedom to make experimental tests when and how we can, we have a scientific basis for religion.

For what is the method of science ? It is a combination of authority and experiment. There still lingers a superstitious notion that in religion all is authority and in science all is experiment. In science we are supposed to prove everything for ourselves—a manifest absurdity ; in religion to take everything on trust from a book or a Church. In fact, no such stark antithesis can be found. Religion, though it is largely a humble receiving of a revealed truth, has its experimental side : science, though it lives by experiment, has an important element of authority. The great scientist is not the man who has no use for the accumulated scientific knowledge of the past, and does everything by the light of untutored Nature. He is a man who has humbly submitted himself to a strict discipline under the guidance of his predecessors ; only because of his training is his originality valuable. The stored-up knowledge which is the tradition of his science is the basis of all that he will ever know, and

he cannot, if he lives to be a hundred, hope to verify every detail of it for himself. No chemist in this twentieth century has ever performed *all* the experiments on which his science rests, or could ever think of doing so. He takes many of them, and the results produced by them, on authority. Of course, it is real authority, not the false authority which from time to time has raised its head in religion, as in other departments of human life. To distinguish the true authority from the false is most important, and we find that true authority is marked by at least three characteristic features: it speaks of that which it knows by its own experience, it freely invites investigation, and it ministers to further progress. The chemist accepts the authority of competent chemists; he accepts it because he is confident that he can test it for himself, if he has enough time, knowledge and skill; and he accepts it when it helps further research. He will not accept a new statement of the atomic theory from a successful chartered accountant who knows no chemistry; and he will not accept the phlogiston theory of oxygen, though eminent chemists have held it. We must in every department of life and thought have the authority which belongs to that department. A nineteenth century divine telling a geologist his business on the strength of a prose-poet's literary and religious use of Semitic folk-lore is now seen to cut a sorry figure. A nineteenth century scientist saying in effect to the men of prayer that Christianity was rubbish, because he was an authority on protozoa, made himself equally ludicrous. Just as necessary is it that authority should invite investi-

gation, and should be fruitful in promoting further experience. Like S. Paul, it must say, 'I commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' The scientific and the religious teacher alike, if they are true to their business, will say each in his own idiom, 'Taste and see how gracious the Lord is.'

If we are seeking to be truly scientific in our attitude towards the claims of religion, we shall need to preserve this equilibrium of authority and experiment, which is the essence of the scientific method. The authority of the expert will have its due place. As elsewhere, so in matters of religion, there are masters, men of spiritual insight and experience who have gone further and known more than their fellows. Their knowledge and experience give them expert standing, as the knowledge and experience of a professor of biology give him expert standing among his pupils and the world in general. They are 'authorities.' Those who disallow from the start the experience of Christian saints and mystics, who are our masters in the realm of religion, are not acting in conformity with scientific principles, as they sometimes imagine they are. They are doing exactly the opposite, and falling into that *a priori* dogmatism which is the negation of scientific method. The religious expert may be wrong: we may all be wrong. Our knowledge may be a tissue of falsehood, and our learned men deluded triflers with a world radically irreducible to reason. But that is improbable. We are willing to take the slight risk involved in any affirmation of truth. And nine-tenths of our true statements are

based on authority, the authority of the experts in the several branches of human knowledge, whether or not we are able to test their statements for ourselves. The only reasonable attitude is to be willing to believe that there is a settled body of truth which we can accept.

Trust a man in his own art, says the old Latin proverb : *Sua cuique in arte credendum*. Why should it be so in science and art and not be so in the field of religious experience ? Is it reasonable to think that just in that very department which makes them great, just where they have risen above their fellows and attained their fame, religious geniuses are nothing but deluded simpletons ? Baron von Hügel says very pertinently : ‘ It is impossible to see why Plato, Aristotle, Leibnitz and Kant, and why again Pheidias and Michael Angelo, Raphael and Rembrandt, Bach and Beethoven, Homer and Shakespeare, are to be held in deepest gratitude, as revealers respectively of various kinds of reality and truth, if Amos and Isaiah, Paul, Augustine and Aquinas, Francis of Assisi and Joan of Arc are to be treated as pure illusionists, in precisely what constitutes their specific greatness.’

We are justified, then, on scientific grounds in claiming that the religious experiences of the great men of faith have evidential value. It is not, of course, our present business to claim that each and every thought-form they have used, every intellectual expression in words of their experience, is the best and truest that can be found. It may be so, or it may not. Still less do we claim for them that they are authorities for facts of history or natural science. What we are here concerned with is the reality of a

personal relationship to God, their contact with a Being to whom the Lord's Prayer may be addressed. This is the central issue, and the one with which we are here dealing. It is here that their authority should have its due place; and there is a remarkable similarity in their experiences, which adds very greatly to the impressiveness of that authority. 'The saints,' as Dr Inge tells us, and none is better qualified to judge, 'do not contradict each other.' They tell a remarkably consistent tale of their adventure and its success. 'It will be found that these men of acknowledged and pre-eminent saintliness agree very closely in what they tell us about God. They tell us that they have arrived gradually at an unshakable conviction, not based on inference, but on immediate experience, that God is a spirit with whom the human spirit can hold intercourse: that in Him meet all that they can imagine of goodness, truth and beauty; that they can see His footprints everywhere in Nature, and feel His presence within them as the very life of their life, so that in proportion as they come to themselves they come to Him. They tell us that what separates us from Him and from happiness is, first, self-seeking in all its forms, and, secondly, sensuality in all its forms; that these are the ways of darkness and of death, which hide from us the face of God; while the path of the just is like a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. As they have toiled up the narrow way, the Spirit has spoken to them of Christ, and has enlightened the eyes of their understandings, till they have at least *begun* to know the love of Christ, which passeth

knowledge, and to be filled with all the fullness of God.'¹ That there is this harmonious testimony, given by those who alone are likely to know, will become obvious to any who will take the trouble to read the literature. From S. Paul and the writer of the Fourth Gospel continuously to the Christian sadhu, Sundar Singh, in our own generation, pioneers have gone forth with the sole aim of discovering God experimentally : and their witness agreeth together.

The other two tests of their authority, the fruitfulness of their teaching in promoting further spiritual experience and their eagerness to have it investigated and verified personally by their fellows, are manifest beyond any reasonable doubt. They need not take us long, for it is difficult to see how they can be denied. The richness of Christian biography, the long tale of varied spiritual achievement by Christians through the ages, are undeniable facts, forming part of the web of secular history : whatever our views on religion, we have to acknowledge so much. So, too, the missionary character of Christianity, and the intensely personal application of what it holds to be its message of truth, are plain matters of fact, written for all to see in history. That every man should come to the knowledge of God for himself is the ideal of every great religious teacher. However rigid and indefensible may have been the view of authority held by some Christian communities and individuals, they would never have denied that they wished the individual believer to find what he was taught in his own experience.

¹ Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (3rd edition), pp. 325-326.

The foregoing argument would seem to lead to this important conclusion. If there is some object of religious consciousness, as there certainly is ; if the greatest souls who have known that object declare it, each from his own experience, to be of a certain kind, as they certainly do ; if, again, their authority has been productive of further and more widely extended spiritual advance, and at its truest and best has eagerly welcomed investigation and personal verification, as it certainly has—then we are justified in saying that the burden of proof rests not with religion, but with its hostile critic. The positive evidence is on the side of religion. Scepticism has to prove that its negative criticism is really fatal, or by its failure it indirectly establishes still more firmly the validity of Christian experience. To remove the objections, if that is possible, is to do more than the merely negative work of criticizing the critic : it is to leave religious experience in possession, as a true apprehension of reality.

CHAPTER VI

THE INCONSISTENCIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

WE are now ready to estimate the real weight of the objections which we surveyed in the third and fourth chapters. It will be most convenient if we leave to the last the more direct attack of the modern psycho-analyst, and consider first the three general groups of objections which von Hügel has formulated.¹ The third of these groups will lead us straight up to the final and most formidable problem.

First, then, we are faced with the suspicion that the variety and inconsistency of the religious affirmations is incompatible with the claim of the religious man that one superhuman Reality is actually, though inadequately, experienced. One religion differs from another in theology and morals: in the history of any given religion we can find contradictions of moral or scientific truth, we see one group differing from another, one member of a group from another member, even one member holding contradictory opinions in his own mind; in most religions much of what believers say about their faith is childish, unreasoned or

¹ The reader is again referred to von Hügel's *Essays and Addresses*, pp. 20-66.

false. How far is all this damaging to the truth of religious experience?

Very little thought is required to see that, by itself, it is no logical condemnation of the religious position. It takes two to make a religion. If there is good reason for believing in God, it is perfectly reasonable to hold to the belief in His existence despite these defects, because they may quite well be due, not to the lack of a common Object, but to the inadequacies in the experiencing human mind. A number of defective mirrors will give a variety of distorted images of the object they reflect: it would be absurd to say that there was no object to be the determining cause of the reflexions, simply on the ground of the distortions. Such influences as heredity, environment, upbringing and education will fully account for the differences in men's religious apprehensions. We are what we allow these things to make us. Our capacity for apprehending God will be more or less sensitive, more or less predisposed to this or that emphasis or distortion, more or less confined to particular thought-forms, as we yield ourselves or offer resistance to the influences which come from a particular past or a particular present. And there is no more reason for supposing that all men are identical in their degree of capacity for religion than for asserting their uniformity in any other human quality. In their capacity for ethical, political or scientific knowledge different generations or different men in the same generation will vary to an almost unlimited extent. It seems to be the same with religion. While probably no one is absolutely 'Deity-blind,' men's

60 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

religious aptitudes vary both in quality and intensity: uniformity is not only undesirable but also impossible.

That conflict of opinion about any given object does not imply the non-existence of that object, or even mean that truth about that object is either unattainable or unattained, can be seen if we turn to the history of science. The solar system, the rocks, plants and animals, all the materials of science, have been there, really existent, all the time that man has been on the earth: yet very many crude and fanciful ideas have been firmly believed about them. The history of science is one long series of exploded hypotheses. We need only think of the great variety of meanings given to such fundamental concepts as heat, light, chemical affinity, gravitation, matter, energy, to see how the really existent can be none the less real because the human mind errs in the interpretation of its experience. Scientists have sometimes seemed to forget these things, and their own lowly origins in astrology, magic, and alchemy, when they have spoken disparagingly of religious belief. But those who care to try can easily turn the tables on scientific critics of theology. Lord Balfour has done so with a demure irony in a deliciously humorous passage in his *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*.¹ But all this imperfection, crudity and confusion in man's ideas about nature does not invalidate our belief in the real existence of the natural objects or of our assured knowledge of them.

The case is precisely the same in philosophy. It

¹ Pp. 304-307: see note at the end of this chapter.

is just as possible to call in question the reality of the external world, because of the variety of sense impressions, as it is to question the reality of the spiritual world for analogous reasons. Solipsism¹ or an extreme subjective idealism are both possible attitudes. We are all solipsists about our dreams: why not about what we call our 'waking' experiences? We need not answer such a question. Such scepticism is the midsummer madness of thought, not its natural or necessary outcome. It is true that experience of the spiritual is a more delicate and subtle thing than experience of the material world, and much less verifiable by external and peremptory tests; but every advance from the merely mechanical levels of reality is necessarily accompanied by such an increased difficulty of apprehension. Thus biology, the science of living organisms, is more intricate than hydrostatics; psychology is more intricate than biology.

But we may go further than this. We have been arguing that the variety of religious experiences is not fatal to the belief in a divine reality acting upon men. That is an under-statement of the truth. Such a variety, far from being incompatible with the existence of God, is most reasonably to be expected, precisely because God is what we believe Him to be; and that for at least three reasons.

(i) The really suspicious and paradoxical situation would be that all men should have had exactly the same clear-cut experience, neatly done up in a tidy

¹ *I.e.* the theory that my own mind and its thoughts are the only reality.

62 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

bundle with no ragged ends or tangled knots. There would then be grave reason indeed to doubt whether their experience was of God at all. For God is such that no full or completely rounded and adequate knowledge of Him is, or can be, attainable by men. All deeply religious thinkers recognize and insist upon the inadequacy and incompetence of human thought and language as they struggle with these immensities. We see in part, and the full vision is not yet. Because its subject-matter is the Eternal and Infinite Reality, symbolism is an inevitable feature in religion : and many of the symbols will be confused, morally or intellectually inadequate, and to later generations, sometimes, wholly unsatisfying and irrelevant. Man is bound to struggle for the best expression he can find, but the best symbols he can devise will do little more than safeguard, with more or less inadequacy, certain aspects of his experience, never wholly explain them. To illustrate only from some of the most valuable symbols, the masculine pronoun applied to God, the antitheses of *Quicunque Vult*, the Heavenly Session of Christ, the Throne of Judgment, are symbols which convey truth rather than express it. There is a profound spiritual truth behind the old legend of Jacob wrestling with the angel of the Lord.

(ii) Religious knowledge, like all other knowledge, is never a stationary fixed quantity in human history. The Bible is the best record we have of a religious development, and there, in a classic example, we can trace not only a broad onward movement from a localized tribal idolatry towards an ethical monotheism and universalism, but also the manifold eddies

and cross-currents which impede or set back the advance of religion. With many relapses into paganism and nature-worship the average religion of the Hebrew people moves forward under the stimulus of great prophets. When prophetic power and insight are lacking, their religion tends to deteriorate, and the reformer is again needed. This uneven, zigzag progressiveness of religion is to be expected because it is in keeping with human development generally ; and it carries with it the inevitable corollary that fanciful ideas of very different value will continually arise. The margin for symbolic variation, as man has felt after God, if haply he might find him in his ascending progress, is broad enough to admit of endless differences in the expression of religious experience.

(iii) Just as human experience of God is incomplete and various in the nature of the case, so such experience as man has is to some extent ineffable. We have to use symbols not only because (as we saw above) God is what He is, but also because our experience of God transcends the available words and thought-forms at the disposal of a creature driven by practical necessity to spend most of his energy on a spatially-extended material world. To experience non-spatial Spirit not only drives men to symbols, but to symbolic expressions derived from a radically different type of experience. If Christianity is true, we are bound to say that Christ 'sits at the right hand of God,' in order that what we mean may not be left unsaid or denied ; but not only are we saying of Christ what we cannot fully understand, we are bound of necessity to say it in words which could never

64 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

express the truth with complete relevancy and accuracy. The spiritual truth conveyed is neither fully realized by the human mind nor capable of expression in human words. If that is so with an experience of the Heavenly Christ, an experience of many millions of men, supported by the Christian revelation and realized by such religious geniuses as a S. Paul or a S. John, it is not surprising that the symbols used by non-Christians or less enlightened minds to express their experience of the 'unknown God' should be infinitely various in moral or intellectual adequacy. When we come to judge among the varying pronouncements of the religious consciousness, the only reasonable standard, here as elsewhere, is the highest and purest experience, tested by history, science and philosophy.

Variety, then, is not a sign of religious falsity. If anything, it is rather evidence that the religious object is what the loftiest Christian faith says it is. Defects, absurdities, contradictions, downright errors, can all be expected when a being like man looks up to the Eternal, and tries to say what he finds in the face of God.

It would, of course, be a grave mistake to see nothing but confusion in the religious consciousness.¹ We have already noticed that the greatest and most enlightened masters of the spiritual life agree in a very remarkable way about the fundamentals of religion. The variety which we have been discussing in this chapter is not any more characteristic or noteworthy than the agreement. It is precisely

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 106 *seqq.*

among the greatest that we should expect to find the confusions and inconsistencies of the average religious man resolved away in clearer and more penetrating vision. That is exactly what we do find. One instance may be given. A spiritual document like S. John's gospel is a rallying-point round which all the deepest religious experience has grouped itself for nearly two thousand years. Such continuity, when we remember the intensely personal and individual note of inner religion, is a most impressive fact. No opacity in the vision of the wayfaring man can outweigh the unanimity with which those of clearer vision have testified to what they have seen on the Mount.

NOTE TO CHAPTER VI

'I have sometimes thought that the parallel between Science and Theology, regarded as systems of belief, might be conveniently illustrated by framing a refutation of the former on the model of certain attacks on the latter with which we are familiar. We might begin by showing how crude and contradictory are the notions of primitive man, and even of the cultivated man in his unreflective moments, respecting the object-matter of scientific beliefs. We might point out the rude anthropomorphism which underlies them, and show how impossible it is to get altogether rid of the anthropomorphism without refining away the object-matter till it becomes an unintelligible abstraction. We might then turn to the scientific apologists. We should show how the authorities of one age differed from those of another in their treatment of the subject, and how the authorities of the same age differed among themselves: then—after taking up their systems one after another, and showing their individual errors in detail—we should comment at length on the strange obstinacy they evinced in adhering to their conclusions, whether they could prove them or not. It is at this point, perhaps, that according to usage we might pay a passing tribute to morality. With all the proper circumlocutions, we should suggest that

66 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

so singular an agreement respecting some of the most difficult points requiring proof could not be accounted for on any hypothesis consistent with the intellectual honesty of the apologists. Without attributing motives to individuals, we should hint politely, but not obscurely, that prejudice and education in some, the fear of differing from the majority, or the fear of losing a lucrative place in others, had been allowed to warp the impartial course of investigation ; and we should lament that scientific philosophers, in many respects so amiable and useful a body of men, should allow themselves so often to violate principles which they openly and even ostentatiously avowed. After this moral display, we should turn from the philosophers who are occupied with the rationale of the subject to the main body of men of science who are actually engaged in teaching and research. Fully acknowledging their many merits, we should yet be compelled to ask how it comes about that they are so ignorant of the controversies which rage round the very foundations of their subject, and how they can reconcile it with their intellectual self-respect, when they are asked some vital question (say, respecting the proof of the law of Universal Causation, or the existence of the external world) either to profess total ignorance of the subject, or to offer in reply some shreds of worn-out metaphysics. It is true, they might say that a profound study of these subjects is not consistent either with teaching or with otherwise advancing the cause of Science ; but, of course, to this excuse we should make the obvious rejoinder that, before trying to advance the cause of Science, it would be as well to discover whether such a thing as Science really existed. This done, we should have to analyse the actual body of scientific truth presented for our acceptance ; to show how, while its conclusions are inconsistent, its premises are either lost in a metaphysical haze, or else are unfounded and gratuitous assumptions ; after which it would only remain for us to compose an eloquent peroration on the debt which mankind owes to Science, and to the great masters who have created it, and to mourn that the progress of criticism should have left us no choice but to count it among the beautiful but baseless dreams which have so often deluded the human race with the phantom of certain knowledge.'

A. J. BALFOUR (the Earl of Balfour),
Defence of Philosophic Doubt (1879), pp. 304-307.

CHAPTER VII

THE CRIMES OF RELIGION

‘**C**ORRUPTIO optimi pessima.’ The terrible catalogue of crimes committed, miseries and sufferings inflicted, by the representatives of Christian supernaturalism is long enough and bad enough almost to justify another Lucretius who should arise and direct the moral passion and intellectual nobility of a great soul against the reign of spiritual terror and its evil fruits. Religion, of course, never claims to make a man a model of all the virtues in twenty-four hours. The mere fact that religious people are imperfect in their lives, and that their practice falls short of their ideal, is not in itself surprising: though practically deplorable and a grave obstacle to the cause of religion, it presents no serious theoretical problem. The history of religion is far more alarming than that. The strange paradox we have to face in this chapter—and it is one of the strangest and saddest in human life—is that it should so often have been necessary, in the development of humane learning and freedom of thought, for not only the religious innovator but also non-religious or even irreligious individuals or groups to do battle for spiritual values against the representatives of religion, and even suffer cruelty and death at their hands for so doing. ‘For if

68 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

Religion be, at bottom, the fullest self-revelation of the Infinite Perfect Spirit in and to man's finite spirit, and if indeed this self-revelation takes place most fully in Religion, how can this self-revealing Spirit, just here, and precisely through the belief in the superhuman here most operative, instigate, or at all events allow, and often thus render at the least possible, terrible crimes of deception, lust, injustice, cruelty? How can It require the aid of man's non-religious activities against man's religious apprehensions? ¹ No one can measure the damage done by this fact alone to man's readiness to believe in the reality of religious experience: it only falls short of being utterly ruinous because there has been, and still is, so much sanctity, self-sacrifice and sweetness, flowing from religious faith, to redress the balance.

To maintain an exact balance of truth here is difficult. But without for one moment glozing over the hideousness of much that has been done by religious men in the name of religion, we cannot agree that we must logically draw the inference made by those who most dwell on this matter. The crimes of religion, distressing as they are, do not actually invalidate the truth of religious experience. Four considerations may be urged: the first two can best be introduced by quotations from von Hügel.²

(1) 'Man's personality, the instrument of all his fuller and deeper apprehensions, is constituted by the presence and harmonization of a whole mass of energies and intimations belonging to different levels

¹ F. von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 46.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 46, 47.

and values ; and not one of these can (in the long run and for mankind at large) be left aside or left unchecked by the others, without grave drawback to that personality. Religion is, indeed, the deepest of energizings and intimations within man's entirety, but it is not the only one ; and though through religion alone God becomes definitely revealed to man as Self-conscious Spirit, as an Object, as *the* Object, of direct, explicit adoration, yet these other energies and intimations are also willed by God and come from Him and (in the long run and for mankind at large) are necessary to man's health and balance even in religion itself. So also the Æsthetic Sense alone conveys the full and direct intimation of the beautiful ; yet it nevertheless requires, for its healthy, balanced functioning, the adequate operation of numerous other energies and intimations, from the senses up to the mental processes, in the man who apprehends the Beautiful.¹ Such an at all adequate and balanced development of any one group of energies and intimations, let alone of the entire personality, is of necessity, except in rare souls or in rare moments of ordinary souls, a difficult and slow process. It has been so certainly with ethics and humaneness. It has been so still more with religion.'

This passage expresses admirably the true facts of human nature in its historical development. Man's advance is uneven ; now one energy, now another

¹ It is instructive to note that Benedetto Croce agrees with von Hügel here : while emphasizing strongly the autonomy of art, he also points out the need of morality and philosophy, once that autonomy is established, in the explication of a true and whole æsthetic theory. See *e.g.* Croce, *Essence of Æsthetic*, pp. 77, 78.

spurts ahead, but a harmonious progress is hardly ever found. And this is true both of nations and of individuals. As we all know, in personal experience, it does not in the least follow that because a man is ethically advanced he is intellectually advanced to the same degree. The artist is often selfish, the good man often ignorant and prejudiced, the philosopher often untouched by art. Charles Darwin's lament in one of his letters that his absorption in scientific research had robbed him of the power to appreciate poetry is well known. But we do not doubt the vision of artist, philanthropist or philosopher in their respective fields of achievement because they are deficient on other levels of personality. So, too, with the religious apprehension. The unevenness of man's advance, his apparent inability to maintain progress on the whole front, no more invalidates the particular intimations of religion than incompetence in science invalidates the artist's claim to the apprehension of beauty. A true experience of God is still possible, though the ethical or intellectual standard may be gravely deficient or even barbarous. Of course, the peculiar intimacy between religion and ethics does mean that ethical defect seriously weakens and corrupts the religious apprehension. We are told on the highest authority that only the pure in heart can have the full vision of God ; and this single-minded sincerity which is pureness of heart is the seed-bed of all the virtues. But as we see in other fields, the inharmonious and jerky mode of advance characteristic of mankind does not necessarily destroy, though in varying degrees it impairs and distorts the

operations of each and every spiritual activity taken by itself.

(2) There is another way in which the use of the historical imagination throws some light on the apparent incompatibility of experience of God and such things as bigotry, dishonesty, cruelty and intolerance, deliberately pursued by those who claim that experience. As von Hügel says: 'It is important too, throughout all these somewhat parallel growths, especially those of Ethics and Religion, always to compare the conviction, command or practice of one time, race or country, not with those of much later times or of quite other races or communities, but with the closely or distantly preceding habits of one and the same race or community. . . . We thus discover that, in many cases which now shock us, the belief that God had spoken was attached to genuine, if slight, moves or to confirmations of moves in the right direction; and in all such cases the belief was, so far, certainly well founded.'¹

We may illustrate this important truth that man's moral responsibility has not always been what it is now by an example which, though pre-Christian, is entirely relevant and is well known. The Mosaic principle, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,' seems to us to-day an irreligious aphorism incorporating an unmerciful harshness. Yet there was a time when it stood for a distinct moral advance, establishing as it did the principle of like retribution, neither more nor less, in place of the much more defective custom of unlimited vengeance for injury.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

And when we come to the horrors of religious persecution and blindness to scientific or ethical truth in the Christian period, we have to remember that even these sins, as we rightly regard them now, were not so morally flagitious in an age when toleration was quite sincerely and universally regarded as a criminal neglect of duty, or when total ignorance of modern science, and misconception (itself innocent) of the early Biblical narratives, made men see error and blasphemy where now we see truth. For that truth, and for the men who at the cost of hatred and death sought after it (not always, it should be remembered, with fine or altruistic motives), we should be grateful, though they may have had little specific religion, or even may have fought against religion. But the rebels are not the only benefactors of humanity. As von Hügel well says: 'A gratitude no less sincere is due to those men also who indeed failed to understand the worth, or who opposed the growth of [some sides of modern knowledge and civilization], yet who preserved the sense of the specific character of Religion—that it deals primarily, not with ideas, but with realities, and that a certain superhumanness is of the very essence of all full Religion.' ¹

(3) A third point of importance is that religion is actually responsible for much less crime than appears on the surface. Modern psychology has taught us that the mainsprings of human motives are to be found in the subconscious, instinctive life. Man is a rational being in the sense that he has the capacity for reasoning, but not in the sense that fully conscious

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

thought-processes have been and always are the grounds of his actions. We give reasons to ourselves and to others for our conduct in the form, 'I thought so and so, and therefore . . .,' but in fact the reasons given are not complete and are often quite misleading.¹ A man under hypnosis is told to open the window and bow three times to the nearest lamppost after coming out of the hypnotic state. He will do so, and when questioned about his reasons will quite innocently invent explanations which seem sufficient to account for his conduct, in complete ignorance of the real impulse conveyed by the hypnotist's suggestions. In normal life we can detect everywhere the same gap between the reasons assigned and the motives actually operative in human action. It is plain enough when we examine the psychology of religious persecution, intolerance and hostility to new truth, with their train of evils. Frequently these things have not proceeded from the religious complex at all, though done deliberately and avowedly in the name of religion. They have masqueraded under the cloak of religion, but they have emerged from quite other sides of man's psychic life. We do not refer now to the many crimes for which a religious pretext has been alleged with conscious hypocrisy, but to the crimes done sincerely in the name of religion. Some of the greatest persecutors, an Alva or Oliver Cromwell,

¹ They may, of course, be sufficient ground for continuing an action or a course of action once begun. There is no reason whatever for supposing that the unconscious motive does not lead to actions which subsequent reflexion recognizes as sound and good. The recognition of their soundness and goodness will then become the sufficient reason for continuing them.

74 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

have sincerely believed that religion was driving them to their atrocious crimes, when they were simply soldier-politicians aiming at victory after the manner of their times, and finding (quite sincerely) convenient support in their religious opinions. The burners of witches alleged the scriptural sentence against them ; but the actual motive often enough must have been fear of the sinister and uncontrollable power which the witches were supposed to exercise. The persecutors of heretics, recusants and other nonconformists have often sincerely believed that they were commanded by the teaching of Christ to 'compel them to come in,' by terror and torture if other means failed, when in fact it was the primitive resentment against revolt and disruptive forces at work in the herd. A great part of what are called 'religious' wars were motivated almost wholly by political feelings. The defenders of scriptural inerrancy against disturbing scientists have alleged religious motives for their attitude, but it has rather proceeded from that tenacious instinct of conservatism which derives from the major instinct of self-preservation and safeguards what we have made parts of our 'self.' We are alarmed at having to face the risky task of reconstructing or even perhaps surrendering an integral part of our self, and instinctively start up in defence.

We may say, indeed, that the real point of the critic's objection is not that religious experience has been the cause of manifold wrongs, but—once more—that it has suffered them to remain side by side with itself and failed to prevent them.

To this we have already attempted a reply in the last section.

(4) Finally, we are bound to make allowance for the historical fact that since the time of the Emperor Constantine (to go no further back) Christianity has had to struggle with the handicap of large numbers of unconverted or partly converted adherents. How seriously this has weakened the corporate character and insight of the Church will be obvious. It has meant disunion, a general tendency to water down the obligations of the Christian name, and the elevation into positions of leadership of men who neither recognized nor wanted to learn what those obligations are. The Church was sundered into East and West. The general Christian conscience was dulled. Popes and bishops did not always care to have it otherwise. As a necessary consequence the religious experience of the Church as a whole has never had that purity and intensity which it should have had, and therefore its refining influence on moral action and moral insight in Europe has been laboured and slow, with grave set-backs when, as in the early sixteenth century, laxity in high quarters became foul and vicious corruption. We may well believe that the Calvinists were wrong and only made matters worse in going to the extreme length of declaring the old Church apostate, and creating a new one: the reformed Catholicism of the Anglican Church from the seventeenth century and (after the Council of Trent) of the continental Church which, more conservative, remained in the papal obedience, showed that such desperate measures were uncalled for; and in any

76 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

event Calvinism was a bitter parody of Christianity. But Calvin was no irresponsible wrecker. His revolt is an undeniable proof of the miserable and precarious conditions of the Church after a thousand years of secular ambitions.

Such considerations as these, be it said once again, do not lessen the grave burden of guilt which lies on the shoulders of religious societies. Only a disingenuous special pleading can evade the plain lesson of history that religion has been stained throughout by crime. But they do tend to cut the ground from beneath the feet of the critic who seeks to deny the validity of religious experience on the basis of this criminal record. Imperfections and dimness of religious apprehension can most readily be admitted ; but that admission would be made without hostile attack. To go beyond that is to go beyond the rights of the case and the weight of evidence. It really implies, as we have seen above, a general scepticism about the validity of any kind of experience. Such scepticism is unanswerable, it is true ; but only because it is beyond the reach of any rational argument whatever.

We might at this point enter upon a panegyric of religion, and draw attention to the manifold and splendid services done to the world by religious persons because of their religion. The dark side of religion is not the only one ; and the light side is at least as powerful, indeed it is more powerful as an argument for religious experience, than the dark side is against such experience. Such a work as Mr

Mozley's *Achievements of Christianity* serves to remind us of the gratitude we owe directly to religion. However, we shall be content here simply to round off this part of our argument with the bare reference to that other glorious characteristic of religion, since we recur to it at a later stage.

CHAPTER VIII

PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

WE must now face the psychological argument, the most radical and, to-day, the most weighty of the arguments against the reality of religious experience. As we have seen, this argument, broadly considered, is twofold. The thesis of the critics we are here to consider is that religious experience is wholly self-generated by the human mind, is therefore illusory in its supposed dependence on an 'external' source, God, and has no reference whatever to any non-human reality. First, the older sceptic, with his now old-fashioned rationalist psychology, tells us it *must* be so ; then some exponents of the 'new psychology,' represented for us here by Jung, tell us that it *is* so. Both would see in the self-contradictory and anti-social quality which they discover in religion, and which we have been discussing, the natural outcome of the fundamental quality of religion—that it is pure illusion ; illusion in fact, being due to observed phantasy-making or suggestion of one kind or another, and illusion by logical necessity, owing to the limitations of the human mind. We have two questions to consider, a question of fact and a question of logic or philosophy. In this chapter we shall concern ourselves with the first, the question of fact. We

have to ask ourselves, Is psychology able to show that religious experience is illusory? To do this, it is necessary to look somewhat closely at the relation between psychology and religion.

What is psychology, whether in its older form, when it concerned itself mainly with cognitive and affective processes, or in its newer form, now that the instincts and the unconscious loom large in the psychologist's mind? Curiously enough, there seems to be no general agreement about the reply to this question. In ordinary talk we speak of psychology as a science, but it does not seem possible as yet to answer with assurance that it is a recognized branch of physical science. The chemist or the zoologist would probably feel some hesitation in giving that answer. The study as a whole is in such a fluid and amorphous condition that the precise and concrete procedures of physical science seem hardly to have established themselves comfortably within it: and, indeed, doubts may be and are raised whether the subject-matter of psychology is intrinsically such that any precision of this sort is possible. Again, psychology seems to some of its exponents to be nearer to philosophy than to science, or to occupy a border-line position between the two, and they would not agree that psychology can ever be wholly assimilated to the physical sciences. Professor Stout,¹ for instance, marks off psychology from all physical sciences, and regards it as a department of philosophy; though he also speaks of psychology as a 'science.' Again, in the literal sense of the words, the

¹ *Manual of Psychology*, p. 4.

psychologists do not seem quite sure what they are talking about ; for is it 'mind,' 'consciousness' or 'behaviour' which is the subject-matter of psychology ? There is no settled answer.

On the whole, however, we may assume provisionally that the modern psychologist regards his subject definitely as a natural science in the making, and seeks to establish it on the same footing as, say, physiology. The physiologist is occupied with the investigation of bodily functions and the psychologist with 'psychical' functions. Each desires to describe a more or less artificially delimited group of observable phenomena, and to use for that purpose the recognized scientific procedures of minutely careful observation, experiment and generalization. In aim and method most modern psychologists seem to be natural scientists, though their subject may not yet be admitted to the status of a natural science. Psychology then, we will conclude, essays to be the natural history of the 'psyche,' the science of mental states and processes, conscious and subconscious and unconscious, and of 'behaviour' in animate beings. If this is roughly a true conception of psychology, and at least it seems to be the most usual idea among psychologists themselves,¹ we know where we are sufficiently well to talk about psychology in relation to other aspects of human life.

Here we are concerned with its relation to religion. Clearly the mental processes of the religious man will

¹ For a recent representative text-book, see Woodworth, *Psychology* (Methuen, 1922), the first chapter of which gives an up-to-date discussion of what psychology is.

be an entirely legitimate subject for psychological inquiry, and an exact and careful account of such processes, so far as they admit of observation and generalization, must be gratefully received by all interested in religion. In this department psychology's function will be to describe such psychic facts and processes as can be observed in conversion, religious conviction, penitence, the sense of sin or of redemption, mystical states and so on. Also, proceeding genetically, it must trace the history and observable conditions of such psychic states. For instance, it finds that rites and ceremonies, things that men *do*, precede theologies, things that men believe; it notes that religious beliefs emerge under certain conditions, vary with various temperaments, cultures, ages and countries: it records these various beliefs, and watches the mental processes and behaviour of their holders: it groups them under heads, and looks for further illustration to justify, or alternately to enlarge and improve, its grouping.¹ All this is the purely scientific investigation of observable phenomena along the familiar lines of a natural science. And it is most valuable and illuminating, even though

¹ Psychology has, of course, a most valuable practical application in religious matters. It will be able to instruct the teacher of religion and aid him in becoming efficient. It will show him humanity in its psychological variety, and advise him how to make the religious appeal in different ways, suitable to different ages, cultures and civilizations. It will warn him against faulty evangelistic methods which have not worked well in the past, and will suggest satisfactory methods. It will provide him with a full history and critique of religion as a psychological fact, so that he can read the lessons of the past. But with all this we are not directly concerned here.

at times its dispassionate probings into human souls provoke in non-scientifically minded people the same kind of revulsion that surgical work often produces.

The revulsion is natural enough, especially since the modern analytical psychologist finds himself bound to stress the great importance of the sexual instinct and its often very disreputable workings. But the attempt sometimes made to foreclose scientific investigation on this account is wholly unworthy and discreditable.

But when we have got our psychological science and attained our generalizations,—which it should be always remembered are at present very uncertain and precarious,—what of it? We have settled nothing by mere description of facts. The further question is still to be raised, What do these facts mean? Religion, manifested in such and such observed phenomena, *is* of such and such a kind; but what is the *value* which we are to attach to these observed beliefs, mind processes and practices? Obviously that is not the same question as confronted the psychological scientist at the outset of his inquiry. It is a totally different question, and on a different plane. We have changed our view-point altogether. We no longer ask, What are the facts? We ask, What is the *value* of these facts?

Now it cannot be too often insisted, so it seems, that this is not a psychological question at all, and that psychology, if it works till the end of time, can never answer it. Psychology, being a natural science, can say, 'Here are certain beliefs, attitudes, emotions and other psychic phenomena, found in certain persons at certain times, under certain conditions. I

guarantee that they are carefully observed, classified and formulated under convenient generalizations.' Just so chemistry says, 'Here are certain substances which act in certain ways, either singly or in combination, according to regular sequences.' But chemistry cannot tell us *why* these substances are there or *why* they behave in these ways. Boyle's law of gases tells us *how* gases behave in certain conditions: it does not, and no chemical law ever can, tell us *why* they so act. Or again: 'The law of gravitation is a brief description of *how* every particle of matter in the universe is altering its motion with reference to every other particle. It does not tell us *why* particles thus move: it does not tell us *why* the earth describes a certain curve round the sun. It simply resumes, in a few brief words, the relationships observed between a vast range of phenomena.'¹ In the same way pure psychology cannot tell us *why* a man is converted, or whether his claim to know God is *true*, *i.e.* has positive logical value. Psychology cannot settle the historical problem, Did Jesus Christ live or did He not? Nor can it settle the theological problem, If He did, was He God Incarnate? Nor yet the metaphysical problem, Is there a personal God with whom men have to do? A psychologist examining religion may say, 'This phenomenon under investigation—say a man's sense of communion with God in the Blessed Sacrament—is a mental fact and therefore comes within my scope: I shall treat it like any other human feeling.' So far he is perfectly right. But if he answers that this feeling is not only in the man's

¹ Karl Pearson, *Grammar of Science* (1900), p. 99.

consciousness, but also proceeds from that man's psychic mechanisms, and from the associated physical factors, and does not, as is alleged, proceed also from Divine action ; if, that is, he claims to be able to tell us *why* the feeling is there, as well as to describe what the feeling is : then—while he has every right to form an opinion of his own—it must be pointed out to him that he is no longer in the realm of pure psychology, but has strayed into theology or metaphysics. And he must defend his opinion on theological or metaphysical grounds. He can tell us what he thinks is meant by love, and by that kind of love which calls itself 'love of God.' But if he denies the existence of the God who is loved, he cannot do it as a psychologist. For as a psychologist he deals with mental states and possibly with their relation to bodily conditions : and God is not a mental state, any more than the baby whom a mother loves is a mental state. Imagine a man who says that he worships the Snark. One would readily agree that such a person would do well to see a medical psychologist without delay. But why ? Not because the psychologist as such can say whether the Snark exists or is a fit subject for worship if it does exist : but because on metaphysical grounds we are already certain that the Snark does not exist, and because belief in such a being as the Snark is antecedently a sign of mental derangement. The Snark itself is a matter for the philosopher.

When, therefore, eminent psychologists tell us that religious experience is a *merely* human product of auto-suggestion or the dream phantasy of the race, we must

ask, Who told you so? For psychology itself, in how-ever distinguished hands, can by no possible means tell them so. It deals with origins and description of facts, not with the truth-value of that which may possibly so originate in human minds. We are dealing not with a psychological statement, but with a philosophical statement, *i.e.* one which, after examining the empirical facts collected by the psychologist, assigns to them that value on metaphysical grounds. And those who make philosophical statements must be prepared to give philosophical grounds for them.

In other words, the whole conception of a psychological, or indeed any other purely scientific, proof that religion is illusory, is based on an intellectual confusion, an illegitimate leap from origin to validity. The transcendence, personality, and independent Deity of the religious object do not come within the view of scientific psychology. As a thoughtful scientist of unimpeachable authority has said, 'Science does not even try to refer facts of experience to any ultimate reality. That is not its business.'¹ And many psychologists have shown themselves well aware of this truth. James² draws a clear distinction between the 'existential judgment' and the 'proposition of value' (*Werturtheil*). Höffding,³ the distinguished Danish thinker, says, 'The axiom that all theology is psychology could never be susceptible of definite proof.' Flournoy⁴ tells us that 'psychology

¹ Professor J. A. Thomson, *Introduction to Science*, p. 42.

² W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 4, 5.

³ Höffding, *Philosophy of Religion* (Eng. trans., 1906), p. 195.

⁴ Quoted by Chandler, *Cult of the Passing Moment*, p. 38.

neither rejects not affirms the transcendent existence of the religious object ; it simply ignores that problem as being outside of its field.' Ribot¹ says, 'The religious feeling is a fact which psychology simply analyses and follows in its transformations, but it is incompetent in the matter of its objective value.'

Some of the extremer exponents of psycho-analysis may object at this point that we have not yet come to grips with the real problem, because we have begged the question by claiming that philosophy is capable of attaining truth. They will maintain that analysis has demonstrated the supremacy of the Unconscious in psychic life and its decisive control over the Conscious : and they will go on to draw the conclusion that this means that in every religious or metaphysical system constructed by the conscious mind we have nothing more than a psychological document which we have no means of checking. For the only checking can come from the conscious mind : and that they have shown to be dominated throughout by the Unconscious.

The answer to this is simple. Any theory which puts the Unconscious in the saddle, and makes the conscious mind a fragmentary and subordinate factor in the psychic entity, is self-contradictory, because it makes *all* theories, including itself, impossible. This crude evolutionism (for such it seems to be), which would account for mind and consciousness by virtually denying that they have any validity, and which yet uses arguments for this purpose, cuts its own throat. It is not only ruinous to all philosophies : it is also the ruin of all science and psychology, which are just

¹ Quoted by Chandler, *loc. cit.*

as much constructions built up by the activity of the theoretical intelligence. We are reduced to a scepticism with which it is impossible to argue, because it is hardly sane.

When, therefore, we find Dr Jung arguing, apparently on the grounds of certain generalizations about the procedure of the unconscious mind, that Christianity is a mythical construction, we do indeed feel some legitimate surprise at the confidence with which he relies on extremely dubious theories, theories by no means generally accepted by competent psychologists.¹ But that is not our only criticism. We have to look beyond his psychology to get at the real grounds of his opinions. It would no doubt be extremely interesting to subject Dr Jung himself to psycho-analysis, and find out what are the origins of his objection to Christianity. But without pursuing this alarming speculation, it is possible to discern from his book the conscious basis on which in fact his anti-Christian opinions are founded. And, of course, that basis has nothing whatever to do with psychology, but is made up of certain very queer historical and philosophical conclusions. We have already quoted a passage from *The Psychology of the Unconscious*² which illustrates the violent and crude dogmatism of its author's philosophy. The assumptions there made are that the world is 'dead, cold and unending'; that the

¹ The element of phantasy in Freud and Jung would be a very interesting subject for psychological study. Freud especially, as Dr Havelock Ellis has said, is much more artist than scientist.

² P. 30.

senses tell us so ; that their testimony is all-sufficient ; that because no one has 'seen a God,' there is no reason to believe in one ; that there is no empirical evidence for God. Some of these assumptions are such that one can hardly believe one's eyes in reading the passage ; for instance, the naïve appeal to sense-perception and, in particular, the amazing confidence that the non-visibility of God is a proof of his non-existence. Others seem to imply a crudely sensationalist theory of knowledge which cannot stand philosophical criticism. This journeyman's work in philosophy bodes ill for the soundness of Jung's historical criticism, and one is not surprised to find him a devout believer in the fantastic eccentricities of Drews and his school. The historical criticism which turns Jesus Christ into a solar myth and the twelve apostles into the signs of the zodiac represents the wildest extremity of reaction from the rationalist pictures of Jesus drawn in great variety by many nineteenth century theologians. We can safely leave it to the historians, who show no sign of doubting the actual existence of Jesus of Nazareth.¹

It is not psychology, then, which tells Jung that the Christian God does not exist and that to pray is to address one's own phantasies. As for his psychological theory of origins, we must wait for the psychologists themselves to test it. It may well be that some myths do originate in the way Jung suggests, though we are promised a work (in the International Library of Psychology) by Professor Elliott Smith, in which he seeks to demonstrate the

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 103.

baselessness of Jung's theory. But even if Jung's view were certainly true instead of being highly problematical, it seems clear that the case for the validity of Christian experience would not be affected. For origins can never *settle* the question of truth-value. Human guesses, even unconscious guesses, may still be true. For instance, the fifth book of Lucretius has some guesses at truth which remarkably anticipate Darwinism, and his approximations to the truth are not in the least less true because they were reached by the most precarious routes. So an unconscious reversion to the 'Father-*imago*' may possibly explain the origin of the belief in God's fatherly care: or on another theory, the longing for the herd or herd-leader may be, as other psychologists have suggested, the origin of the idea of a paternal God. But the truth or falsity of that belief is not thereby settled. For there may be a God, and God may in fact be best described as Father. And in facing that possibility we are outside psychology.

Does it then follow that we are to pay no heed to the analytical psychologist in matters of religious truth? Can he not throw light of some kind on questions of validity when, by unveiling unconscious motives, he brings into the open a marked bias for or against some religious doctrine in any particular individual? A man with a violent 'Tyrant-Rebel' complex is 'agin the Government' whatever the Government may be, and we certainly tend to distrust him as a politician on that account, though on any given question he may in fact be right, despite his bias. Similarly, a man who has suffered in child-

hood from an unsympathetic or cruel father may have a strong unconscious antipathy to the idea of a paternal God, and so tend to be anti-Christian : or, on the other hand, he may have an unconscious longing for his mother, and be biassed towards adopting Roman Catholicism and finding comfort in exaggerated devotion to Our Lady. Cannot psychology act as a sort of preliminary testing-ground where *some* religious experience (or the lack of it) can be discounted without resort to theology or metaphysics ?

What it seems the psychologist can do is to suggest a doubt, and give a warning that special caution is necessary in evaluating the experience of a man with a discoverable bias that affects his vision and differentiates him from normally balanced and clear-sighted people. For instance, it is highly probable that devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary developed in the Christian Church owing to an impulse which was largely pagan. The conscientious theologian is bound to take notice of that probability, and scrutinize the theological basis of the devotion with special care. For this reminder he will be grateful to the historian of religion as a psychological phenomenon. But, as we have already argued, it will still be the theologian or philosopher and not the psychologist who has to face the question of truth or error. The student of origins as such and apart from his other qualifications has no means of deciding the ultimate validity of the beliefs which proceed from those origins.

There is, however, yet another way in which the psychological evidence is highly important. The consideration of this point brings us to a new chapter.

CHAPTER IX

GOD AND THE HUMAN MIND

THE last chapter was an attempt to clear the ground by showing that psychology cannot assert the illusoriness of religious experience. But if we accept the conclusion it sought to establish, we are not thereby free to disregard the psychological evidence altogether; far from it. The objection we tried to meet can be easily restated in a more discriminating form. However confident we may feel about the line between 'existential' and 'value' judgments, they are not entirely unrelated. The value judgment is not in the air, but rooted in the existential judgment. It may still be true, despite our last chapter, that the evidence discovered by psychological science is such that the unbiassed philosopher, when he comes to evaluate it, is compelled to adopt a purely human explanation of religious experience. If it is true that theology only begins where science ends, it is also true that theology is conditioned by the findings of science. The materials with which the philosopher works are not infinitely plastic. Supplied to him by the different sciences, they are not susceptible of merely arbitrary handling. Some theories which unfettered speculation might start without absurdity are ruled out in advance by that massive fact of the Given. We can only use

Nature or understand Nature by obeying her. For instance, if physical science found that the universe was wholly irreducible to rational categories and was an unintelligible chaos, Christian theology would be untenable: and the fact that science actually finds the universe to be regular and intelligible, so far as it can be observed, is a subsidiary support for theism. Or, to come closer to our present subject-matter, it might turn out that the material provided by the psychologist for philosophical judgment revealed such limitations in the human mind that auto-suggestion, conscious or unconscious, was the inevitable explanation of religious experience as we know it.¹ Auto-suggestion may be necessary as a *philosophical* theory, if *psychologically* the mind shows no power to rise above the phenomenal world. Origin is not the same as validity, but origin in this matter may affect validity, if the experiencing mind is found to be in its own nature incapable of the experience claimed. Here, then, we come to our last obstacle, the alleged limitations of the human mind; limitations which, it is claimed, make some theory of illusion inevitable.

We must begin with a proviso about the way in which the question now before us is usually stated. [At first sight we seem to be faced with two mutually exclusive theories, 'auto-suggestion' and 'grace.' With the one we are invited to exclude God; with

¹ By 'suggestion,' in the technical sense of the psychologist, is meant the action of the conscious on the unconscious mind. I use it here for convenience in the looser sense which it receives in common speech as covering also the action of the unconscious on the conscious. It seems pedantic not to do so, provided one's meaning is clear: and it saves wearisome circumlocution in the following pages.

the other we are supposed to rule out 'subjectivity.' Such an antithesis, however, is far from being satisfactory, and we must decline any controversy that presents to us this crude pair of supposed contraries. The two ideas are not irreconcilable, and the believer in the validity of religious experience is not concerned to repudiate wholly the idea of 'auto-suggestion' in his experience. On the contrary, the Christian can find a grain of very precious truth in it. This can be simply stated. We may, first, suggest truth to ourselves as well as falsehood: and, further, that in us which suggests truth may be the immanent spirit of God. There are two lines of dialogue in Goethe's *Iphigenie* which express this twofold fact excellently; they may be roughly rendered thus:

THOAS. This is no god: 'tis thine own heart which speaks.

IPHIGENIE. The gods speak to us only through our hearts.¹

If we hold that religious experience cannot be merely self-suggested phantasies, we must still insist on the truth which Goethe thus expresses. Religion can never safely forget the transcendence of God, but at its best it will hold firmly the complementary truth of immanence. For the Christian God is not merely ourselves; but He does speak in and through us. Immanence is not negligible, because in late years it has received a perhaps excessive emphasis. The mystical indwelling of the Logos is an essential part of Christianity. The Christian is not, of course, a 'part' of God. Vedantic monism and a Pythagorean conception of the true human self as a Divine spirit imprisoned in the lower world of matter are wholly

¹ *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, Act I. Scene 3.

alien to Christianity ; and many feel legitimate hesitation about some recent modernist attempts at Christology, based on a substantial identity of human and Divine nature. Nevertheless that ineffable union of human and Divine which the mystics have symbolized by such phrases as the 'apex of the soul' or the Divine 'spark,' and which S. Paul expressed by his two complementary ideas 'in Christ' and 'Christ liveth in me,' S. John by the simile of the vine and its branches,—this is fundamental to all true religion. So the spiritual insight of the saint in meditation does not admit of nice distinctions between the contribution of the meditating saint and the contribution of the Holy Spirit. We may call it either the saint's religious genius or the illumination of the Spirit, provided we account both true descriptions. If we ask who wrote the thirteenth chapter of S. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, there can only be one answer, but it may take two forms—God, by the hand of His servant Paul, or Paul, by the grace of God.

The phenomena of auto-suggestion, so called, may therefore be, and often are, a further revelation to the Christian of the workings of the immanent God. So far from being fatal to a belief in God, they may sometimes bring welcome verification of a faith in the Holy Spirit previously accepted on other grounds. We, no doubt, do well to exercise philosophical caution about modern psycho-therapeutics, especially in some forms, and to walk warily when dealing with that intriguing thing, the 'subconscious self.' But it is not easy to doubt that here we have important new evidence for a spiritual interpretation of life.

This proviso made, we must go on to say that the psychological facts in no way limit us to the theory of an exclusively human source of religious experience, or even recommend it.

There is only one way in which we can hope to estimate the capacity of the human mind, and that is to examine its actual experience. We are bound to use scientific method, the method of observation and hypothesis, patiently putting ourselves to school with the psychological facts, and letting them suggest their own explanatory formulæ. When we are told that in religion the human mind is dealing with the Unknowable, and is therefore objectifying its own wish-figures and suggesting to itself the religious emotions and intimations, because it cannot in the nature of things know the Unknowable, we begin to have doubts about this 'Unknowable' as soon as we set ourselves to examine the religious consciousness in man. Mr Bradley's famous epigram about Herbert Spencer, who 'told us more about the Unknowable than the rashest of theologians has ever told us about God,' is more than a witticism: it is a pungent reminder that agnosticism, when it is not a veil for indifference or intellectual sloth, is an extremely difficult philosophical position. For the agnostic has great trouble in escaping the pitfall of self-contradiction: he is always liable to make assertions about that of which *ex hypothesi* no assertion can be made. The very term 'Unknowable' implies the existence of a Something, of which we know this, at least, that it has existence. And, short of solipsism, it is difficult to see how this minimum of ontological assertion can be rationally

avoided. It is equally difficult to see why metaphysical inquiry is bound to stop there. If the mind is capable of saying 'something exists besides my own sensations,' it is capable of more: for bare existence is a logical abstraction, not a datum of experience. Something of the *mode* of existence is always included in our experience of fact. The religious consciousness, we must conclude, even though we dismiss all existing religions as unsatisfactory, must nevertheless be at least capable of attaining some modicum of metaphysical truth: and, if that is so, we have every reason to approach the study of religion expecting to find data which do deserve the application of scientific method and philosophical evaluation. We may say without undue rashness that the trend of modern thought is towards the view that the truth-claim of the religious consciousness is not to be met with a *a priori* rejection, but is to be dealt with on its merits.

When, therefore, we examine the psychological data, we find that there is a good *prima facie* case for accepting the general validity of religion's claim to contact with Reality.

(1) We cannot deny the fact that throughout recorded history man on the whole has been a religious animal. This universality of religion is in itself an arresting fact; but its impressiveness is trebled when we proceed to reflect on the further fact that his religion has been one of the most *important* features of man's history. It has been no 'epiphenomenon,' no merely ornamental iridescence on the surface of life, but a profound and stormy power for life and

death, for supernatural good and mountainous evil. It needs a very sturdy confidence in one's own judgment to dismiss religion as pure illusion, a dance of mendacious phantoms, when its literally immense historical importance is allowed to make its due impression on the mind. Pure illusions do not enjoy such vitality. Readers of Carlyle will remember how in *Heroes and Hero Worship* he pours scorn on the petty unimaginative scepticism which confidently tosses on to the rubbish-heap world-shaking experiences of human souls. And he has good reason. Nor can we forget that, in its most characteristic form, religion's one fundamental claim, more important than anything else about it, is just this, that it is based on an experience of ultimate Reality. It has expressed itself in a wide diversity of forms. But whether its form has been a ritual dance, a dramatic ceremony, a moral code, or a theological system, it has been profoundly and earnestly convinced that it was in touch with something other than man, and that something the very core of the world's being. To take the most rudimentary instance, the child-like antics of the savage's religion have never, so far as one can see, lost this sense of contact with a profoundly significant Reality. Dim and brutalized his perception may be; but his preoccupation with the mysteries of sex and the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth in human and non-human creatures, is itself sufficient evidence of this truth. Reality is his interest, though it be but the forces of Nature, not yet the unity of Nature and Supernature. The higher religions have widened and ennobled their vision of Reality, until a S. John or a

S. Paul seems to be poles asunder from the primitive nature-cults: yet, as S. Paul knew and asserted, God had not left Himself without witness; and wherever man has known religion, his religion has been a feeling after God, if haply he might find Him. Nothing else is so characteristic of religion.

(2) There is good reason for holding that this religious apprehension of Reality, so universal, so important, is as genuine as any other. For every apprehension of Reality stands on the same footing. All are quasi-sacramental modes of apprehending Spirit in and through sense-experience: and to deny religious experience is ultimately to deny any apprehension of the spiritual order, whether moral, logical or æsthetic. Unless we are willing to sacrifice moral nobility, science and art, we are bound to admit that experience of the non-material is possible for men. The experience of God is psychologically just as much a factor in the normal consciousness and the normal experience of life as artistic appreciation: and both are, equally, unified psycho-physical contacts with Spirit. We do not need to get outside our skins to experience God unless no experience of non-material entities is possible. But no reading of human experience is tolerable which does not admit that it is shot through with spiritual apprehensions. Science is nothing if it be not the sacrament of rational order, as art is of beauty and the good life of love. Truth, Beauty and Goodness condition our experience as much as the physical environment through which they come. Human life is unthinkable without values. Brute physical fact has neither meaning nor reality:

it is an incomprehensible phantom which melts as we try to grasp it. By having knowledge of these values, which are qualities of Spirit, we *ipso facto* have knowledge of Spirit : and the religious sense is only another line of approach to Spirit, more direct and going further because it goes to God immediately and not through His manifestations. The puzzles about Divine personality do not amount to much when once it is realized that the Christian attribution of personality to God is primarily a safeguard against thinking of God in terms of a mere blind, impersonal, or infra-personal force. Christianity has no objection to calling God 'supra-personal,' if anyone thinks he gains thereby, or alternatively to admitting that human personality is incomplete, and that God, as Lotze held, is the only fully personal being.

Man being what he is, any experience of God, as we have remarked above, will be fragmentary and incomplete. Such imperfection, which all theological formulation contains, is recognized by all competent Christian thinkers. If by agnosticism we meant no more than that the ultimate Reality necessarily eludes *full* comprehension by the human mind, Christian philosophy would cheerfully acknowledge the truth of agnosticism, and point out that in this sense it has itself always been agnostic. We know nothing exhaustively, least of all the Supreme Reality. But this is a very different thing from a wholesale rejection of religious experience as mere auto-suggestion on the ground that no truth-conveying religious symbolism is possible.

(3) Thirdly, we can bring Christian experience to

the touchstone of life, and observe how it passes empirical tests. All truth-claims, in religion as elsewhere, have to be tested in application to life : and not all survive the ordeal. Nowhere in this essay have we for a moment forgotten that not everything claimed as valid experience by Christians, still less everything claiming to be religious experience outside Christianity, is equally justified in its claim. We have to try the spirits whether they be of God. When we come to sift the various religious experiences claimed by man, we undoubtedly find plenty of delusion, false or misleading symbolism, interpretations of experience so irrational or unconvincing that they must be rejected as more false than true. Suggestion, whether from self or from others, will often prove to be the source of such delusions. We may expect to find such error in much of Christianity, despite the fact that religious experience has here reached its clearest and noblest vision. Christians have claimed experiences which contradict those of other Christians, so that both cannot be equally true : they have made claims which contradict assured results of history, Biblical scholarship and physical science. All this is admitted by Christians themselves. There is, however, a fundamental experience of God in Christ which underlies the various forms of Christianity with their characteristic excesses and defects ; and this is a conspicuously definite, steady and persistent fact, singularly true to type throughout its history. This, the highest flight of religion, is the most authentic Christian experience, found in Christians of every kind and deeper than all their differences about

Papacy, Episcopacy, the Mass, the Saints and other important but secondary matters.¹ To this we must apply, as a final criterion, the empirical tests by which in practical life we distinguish experience of the Real from fancy and hallucination. What we have now to see is whether the historic Christian experience of a life forgiven, cleansed, strengthened and uplifted by God in Christ through the Spirit, the experience for which we have argued on general philosophical grounds, can pass these tests. The trans-subjective reality of the Objects of religious experience and the validity of the experience itself both need empirical verification if the human mind is to regard the experiment of faith as justifiable. This inquiry demands a chapter to itself, and we therefore pass on to the verification of Christian experience by the application of the most important empirical tests we can discover.

¹ I am not resuscitating that unpleasant corpse undenominationalism, but merely noting the fact that some things are derivative.

CHAPTER X

THE VERIFICATION OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE¹

IT would be an endless task to set down all the ways in which the Christian hypothesis of a valid experience of God has verified itself to the minds and consciences of men and women for nearly two thousand years. This chapter cannot be more than illustrative. A living religion is an intensely individual thing, and individuals find their faith proving itself in an infinite variety of successful applications. But, without attempting completeness here, there are certain general lines along which we look for justification of what we hold to be true, and we can to some extent systematize our tests. Four categories suggest themselves. They overlap, but the practical convenience of the distinction is all we need consider here. Our faith must be more logically satisfying than any alternative explanations of the experiences which produce it: the experiences must be morally fruitful: they must be proof against 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune': they must be a source of power and health to mind and body. We have now

¹ In this chapter I am indebted to a work by Miss Rouse and Dr Crichton Miller, *Christian Experience and Psychological Processes*, published by the Student Christian Movement.

to see whether Christianity, as an experience of God, can face this fourfold test with success.

I

(a) The preceding chapters of this book may all be regarded as parts of an argument in favour of the logical validity of the Christian hypothesis as against alternative explanations, and we shall not traverse the same ground again. There are, however, certain supplementary points which we may conveniently introduce here under our first heading of logical verification.

The first point is the verification of Christian experience by the test of *history*. Christianity is not merely an ideal construction, built up by sages and philosophers to satisfy the abstract demands of reason. It is a reading of historical facts, and emerged from the impact of a historical Figure on His human environment. No solvents have succeeded in destroying the fact of the historical Jesus. We have already referred to the quite abortive attempts made by Drews and, in this country, by J. M. Robertson to prove that Jesus Christ never existed. We shall not spend time over them here, as the theory has been destroyed beyond repair by Dr F. C. Conybeare,¹ who certainly has no orthodox axe to grind. The contemptuous dismissal of it by Sir James Frazer may also be mentioned, as showing what a scientific anthropologist of unsurpassed learning thinks of it. 'The doubts which have been cast on the historical reality of Jesus are in my

¹ In *The Historical Christ*.

judgment unworthy of serious attention. Quite apart from the positive evidence of history and tradition, the origin of a great religious and moral reform is inexplicable without the personal existence of a great reformer. To dissolve the founder of Christianity into a myth, as some would do, is hardly less absurd than it would be to do the same for Mohammed, Luther and Calvin. Such dissolving views are for the most part the dreams of students who know the great world chiefly through its pale reflection in books.' ¹

From this basis in history Christianity cannot be torn. In their compatibility with history we have a test for psychological explanations of religion. Christianity is no undiluted quietism or inner-light religion, and therefore no objection to Christianity based exclusively on psychological material can be convincing. In the search for religious truth we have to settle accounts with the historical figure of Jesus, the evidence for His teaching, miracles, claims and resurrection. These things are not indeed exempt from psychological inquiry, but they are beyond the power of psychology to destroy. If we deny the claims of Christianity we must ultimately do so on historical grounds: and it is very difficult to find historical grounds for a denial. Our comfortable modern indifference to the disciplines of religion is no fruit of serious-minded historical study. Where it is not an attempt to blink the inconvenient fact that Jesus demands much from men, it is all too often intellectual sloth, based on a vague notion that, because scholars have raised questions about its traditional form,

¹ *Golden Bough*, Part VI., p. 412.

Christianity is an exploded superstition. Moral, not intellectual, causes are at work. If we desire to escape from Christian belief conscientiously, the burden of proof lies on us : and we cannot stop short of showing that the dominating historical Figure of the Gospels and the historical situation which followed Him are valueless and meaningless in our search for truth. What think ye of Christ ? The question has still to be answered : and in our present riot of popular psychology it is well to remind ourselves that no alluring hypothesis built on mob-psychology, auto-suggestion or race phantasy, can veil the plain fact that a historical (and then a metaphysical) answer is demanded. For all the evidence goes to show that Jesus did live, and that the synoptic Gospels (to say nothing of the fourth Gospel) give an account which cannot be dismissed as a tissue of lies. For the factual character of their religion Christians may well be devoutly thankful. It takes religion out of the murky caverns of our own minds, and challenges us on the ground of objective happenings and a concrete Person of history. No doubt it exposes the Christian to various alarms and excursions when a Harnack or a Loisy, a Schweitzer or a Bousset, offers a radical re-reading of the historical material. No doubt a pure mysticism of a non-incarnational neo-platonic type would escape these troubles. But it is a wholesome thing for all concerned to be thrown back on concrete historical facts, and to be compelled to give an account on common ground of the faith we hold. We can be grateful to the disturbing critic if only for that. There is quite enough irrationalism in religion : it is

very good that there is in Christianity this region where sentiment has to wait on the evidence and on reason.

In making this claim that history does verify Christianity, we do not, of course, forget that the religious value of Jesus has been variously estimated by those who, with almost universal consent, admit not only the historicity but also the splendour of His personality. But, even with the humanitarian estimate, the view that this supreme example of humanity should have been both sane, which is not likely to be questioned, and yet at the same time hopelessly and entirely deluded in all the bases of His life, is too difficult a hypothesis. The fact of Jesus means that a lofty religious experience and religious truth are possible for man, unless we are all inhabitants of a cosmic madhouse.

(b) The *consistency* of the Christian experience is another feature which it is difficult to explain on any hypothesis except that of the substantial truth of the Christian claim. Illusions are dependent on personal qualities and peculiarities : they vary with every man who suffers from them, according to his training and environment, and they are conditioned by the kind of suggestion which his own individual training and environment can give. But the evidence derived from Christian history shows a remarkable unity in religious experience in very diverse types of men. 'History impartially studied shows that Christian experience is not confined to certain rare individuals, or groups of individuals, drawn from a particular environment ; but that it can be, and is found over

and over again through the history of nineteen centuries, that it can be and actually is reproduced in the most diverse human beings, the lowest savage and the most educated modern. We can therefore draw the remarkable inference that Christian experience is in a certain sense independent of intellectual, social, ethic and anthropological conditions.' ¹

We have already referred to the remarkable uniformity of the testimony given by the great religious experts. To this we have to add that in its fundamentals the Christian experience goes far beyond the circle of these chosen souls. The pious lady, regular at the daily office, and deeply involved in all parish organizations, seems to be regarded by some as the only type to whom religion appeals, and she has been the butt of much cheap and wholly unmerited scorn. Like many contemporary references to religion, this view can only be put down to a complete ignorance of the actual situation. In refutation of it we might, of course, point to the great scholars, statesmen and lawyers who in the past and in the present have been devout Christians: we might show how difference of race, tradition and education has not prevented Chinese, Indian, Negro and European from sharing the same experience of Divine guidance, of forgiveness and inward peace through faith in Christ: we might trace Christian unanimity across nineteen centuries from a Cilician rabbinist to some farmer or doctor, churchwarden in an English village church to-day. Yet damaging as all this would be to

¹ H. Bois, *La Valeur de l'Expérience Religieuse*, p. 166 (quoted by Rouse and Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 64).

the idea that Christian experience is a self-manufactured product of certain temperaments, a short period of actual contact with religion in this country is even more effectively fatal. Every priest knows that in any parish he is likely to find certain familiar types : the devout lady, the 'ecclesiastical layman' (not so frequent as is supposed), the stolid man who goes to church as a social duty, the ardent youth inclined to 'ritualism,' and so on. But if he has to do with a big town congregation, or moves about the country from place to place, he is continually finding, perhaps with some surprise, how much wider than he thought the Church's net is cast. When there are millions who 'don't go anywhere,' there is always a temptation to expect that those who do are people who, being alike, segregate themselves from the rest. But they are by no means all alike. Not all churchgoers have a very vivid religious experience, it is true. But it is increasingly less common to go to church for the sake of form and for conventional reasons, and communicants have generally a real, even when elementary, Christian experience. When the present writer reflects on the very various types to whom he has given communion during the last five years, in a ministry of quite limited range, he wonders how the notion that parsons minister to 'a few old women' can survive. Chance memories can recall bishops, tramps, dons, slum lads, charwomen, public school boys, shopkeepers, colonels, business men, scientists, poets, brewers, writers, artisans, and many others from the most mystical to the most matter-of-fact. There may be, and doubtless are, elements due to suggestion in

the experience of all these : but it is impossible to believe that, despite all the differences in knowledge, social environment, and intellectual capacity, they should all, year after year, share the same experience of fellowship with Christ, if the whole thing is a fantastic delusion. It will not do to say that, though different, they have all submitted to the same kind of delusive suggestion, which accounts for the similarity of the experiences. For that is to beg the question. They were all, no doubt, taught to expect this benefit from the Holy Sacrament, and such teaching is suggestion. But why delusive? Why should experience bear out teaching so uniformly in men and women infinitely various in suggestibility, character and intellectual equipment? If only simple peasants or child-like savages were concerned the suggestion theory might be more plausible. But why should Baron von Hügel or the Dean of St Paul's chase the same phantom as the Basuto or the Korean, and never see that it is a phantom?

The argument from this unity manifest through great diversity is much strengthened, as against the theory of delusion, by the fact that normally in Christian experience there is a painful and humiliating element. The sense of sin and unworthiness is an un-failing part of that experience : and the psychologists tell us that, except in morbid subjects, it is almost impossible by suggestion to make a man do anything which is humiliating, or which goes against the deep-seated instinct of personal pride. If that is so, we seem rationally bound to assume that the appearance of this same disagreeable factor in varying individuals is due

to a real Other, whose effect on the human personality is such as to produce this, among other, emotional reactions, of whatever sort be the individual concerned.

(c) Christian experience, again, is self-verifying in that it is *amenable to, and powerfully aided by, directed thinking*. Christian experience can lead to a philosophy of life tenable after the most searching intellectual scrutiny. The pretence sometimes made that no really able mind can accept Christianity is the merest affectation. The theistic and Christian world-view (we have no convenient word for *Weltanschauung*) has won and still wins the allegiance of many of the world's best minds. And an intellectual grasp of Christianity means a corresponding enrichment of religion. This does not, of course, mean that only the learned can attain to the fullest religious experience. Such an idea would be preposterous. But there is a dialectic of the soul which we call wisdom, and this is reason at its highest. It is distinct from learning, and the most learned do not by any means always possess it. An illiterate peasant who has brooded on the great system of spiritual truths which the creed is intended to safeguard may attain wisdom, though he has never heard of Harnack's *History of Dogma*.

Again, when we come to study the dogmatic structure which historical Christianity has, generally speaking, come to accept, then whatever our view of the historical and experiential basis on which it rests, we have to recognize the strenuous and acute reasoning which has gone to the building of it.

Christian dogmatics are most fitly regarded as a

systematic body of formulæ, covering and induced from the data of religious experience. They are, at best, genuinely scientific in character. Jung is forced to pay a tribute to the scholastic philosophy, despite his own opinion that its materials were mythical. And the progress of Christian theology since the mediæval period has been steadily in the direction of a more and more objectively critical science. Its scientific character is illustrated by such a doctrine as that of the Trinity. We reach the belief that there are three *personæ* in one God, not by any *a priori* mystery-mongering, or by an oracular 'dogma' in the vulgar misinterpretation of that excellent word, but by the scientific process of seeking a hypothesis to fit the facts of a three-fold experience of God. Even the technical difference between the orthodox Catholic theory of the Triune God and such an approximation as *e.g.* Tertullian's 'economic' theory is reached by a careful process of scientific testing and rational co-ordination of ideas. It is, to say the least of it, very unlikely that a mere product of infantile phantasy or herd-suggestion would be thus amenable to scientific formulation, or provide a rational philosophy of life.

(d) Another indication that Christianity is a valid hypothesis is that *it makes tolerable, if it does not solve, otherwise hopeless problems*. There is no discoverable clue to the problems of evil and suffering, of freewill and determinism, of life and death, except in the Christian experience of Divine Love, especially as revealed in the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. Philosophy has no comfort to give: it still shrugs its

shoulders at the idea of a solution: and no other religion has any even plausible explanation to offer. We obviously cannot here enter into this great subject, and in a few sentences attempt the explanation of how the Christian experience takes the sting out of all these primary problems of life. We must be content to say that in the lives of countless Christians the message of the Gospel has provided a practical solution which has proved sufficient, and has enabled them to wait with calm confidence the complete theoretical explanation which metaphysic still strives unsuccessfully to reach. Man being what he is, it is far more reasonable to expect a practical solution of this kind than to look for metaphysical finality. And when a religion succeeds in providing such a practical solution for all kinds of men over long spaces of time, we are justified in saying that its success at least disposes us to prefer the hypothesis of its substantial truth to the hypothesis of its illusoriness and invalidity. Whatever broken lights other religions may have, no one of them has had the same success. Judaism, not accepting the revelation of Divine Love in Christ, has not the same assurance, and only comes to its real self in Christianity, where the Divine acceptance and sharing and overcoming of evil and suffering is made manifest. Mohammedan fatalism makes God a moral enigma, Hindu pantheism makes Him morally neutral and indifferent. Both but increase our intellectual travail. Buddhism only confesses its helplessness when it devotes all its energies towards escape from a world of pain, a prison-house of impersonal, unforgiving causation. We do not contend that in this

matter of intellectual satisfaction everything that 'works' is 'true.' But with the great panorama of science stretched out before us, we cannot help saying that what is 'true' 'works.' And Christianity does work.

II

The Christian hypothesis is no less strikingly verified by its moral fruits than by the intellectual satisfactions it affords. There are two prominent features of the Christian life which are quite incompatible with any theory of delusion, but are natural and appropriate if Christianity is based on a valid experience of God.

(a) The Christian ethic is, by common consent of all who are capable of judging, one of the highest, if not the highest, known to the human race. That in itself is somewhat surprising, if it be the fruit of grotesque delusions about life. 'Light, order and fruitfulness' are not conspicuous results of foolishness: but they are conspicuous features of those persons who in divers countries and ages have been faithful to Christ; and that uniformity of the Christian experience to which we have referred above is most noteworthy in the kind of life and moral character which it tends to produce. But when we come to examine certain of the qualities of the typical Christian character, it is still more difficult to believe that such moral wholesomeness as we find there can persist on a basis of childish delusion. For we have to recognize there, as prominent ingredients, self-control, sanity, and truthfulness, rare visitants to the deluded and hysterical,

self-denial and long-continued moral progress, rare results of primitive longings and instinctive satisfactions. Not by any means all who claim the name of Christian have shown these qualities : and we do not forget that fanaticism, morbidity, obscurantism and hypocrisy have often appeared in Christian groups and individuals. Nevertheless, it is true to say these vices are universally recognized as incompatible with the Christian profession. Christians are expected to be very different. Those who win recognition as Christians properly so-called are those in whom men discern a quiet persistence in well-doing, combined with an inward purity and self-mastery. If we recall the Christians of our acquaintance who have lived closest to their moral standards, we shall find a sane and sober happiness and peace accompanying a life of loving service, even where external circumstances have been troublous and painful. Wherever we find a Christian who is morally and spiritually advanced, we recognize one of whom the prophet might have been thinking when he said, ' In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'

The hectic and morbid note in much Christian biography will be quoted against this view of the essential sanity of the Christian experience. But it does not seem to be a serious objection. The greatest Christians have, of course, gone much further than this quiet, sober, often humorous sanctity of the best among the rank and file. It would be gravely misleading to suggest that this is all. Very noteworthy in Christian history is the prevalence of moral heroism. Christianity is full of magnificent self-

abnegations, romantic idealisms, spiritual epics. So vigorous has been the life surging through the Christian Church that heroic adventures and exploits have always been likely. The life stories of S. Augustine, S. Francis, S. Catharine, of Father Damien, Livingstone, or Mary Slessor are but a half-dozen among hundreds that the Christian centuries can produce. When we get into this region of moral exaltation much will necessarily happen which the 'practical man' finds beyond him. Unless his lack of poetry is counterbalanced by humility, he will tend to be betrayed into some rather obtuse criticisms. The great ascetics, especially, have been hardly treated by our unimaginative utilitarians. Their passionate longing to share the experience of their Master, who had not where to lay His head, and suffered hunger, thirst and scourging, belongs to romance. Romantics are extravagant people when measured by our everyday standards, which insist on a net result of material advantage of some kind. But we certainly are not going to do without romantics, or admit that life would be as rich and full if we were all to be limited to the practical sagacity of a bank manager. The undoubted streaks of excess and morbidity in Christian history are the obverse of that adventurous generosity in self-abnegation, that towering and romantic heroism which the overflowing spirit of Christianity has produced.

Seen in this light they do not present any graver difficulty than that of extravagant exaggerations of one of the most splendid and most precious elements in Christianity. Like the heroic sanctity with which

they have often been combined, these austerities are the exception which 'prove the rule.' Genius will have its way: but it is rare. The portrait of the average Christian good man will contain neither the dazzling lights nor the deep shadows. His goodness is most commonly that excellence of sober-mindedness, Aristotle's *Sophrosyne*, wherein self-control and a wisely benevolent activity have become a settled habit of the soul.

(b) Christian experience is verified by the fact that it often produces nothing less than a moral revolution. Faith in God and what Christians would call the answering aid of the Holy Spirit can and do destroy deep-rooted habits which the individual has either acquired himself or which his social environment and antecedents have implanted in him: and by this process character is utterly changed. To some extent psycho-therapy, without conscious reliance on any non-human power, can attain the same result by suggestion and mental analysis. But apart from the philosophical question whether, after all, the medical psychologist is not in fact calling on the Divine forces immanent in man and nature, whatever terminology he may choose to adopt, religious faith, with its appeal to God, is far the most successful minister to a mind diseased. It goes further, and it goes deeper. Psycho-therapy, as a part of medical practice, is but in its infancy, and time alone will show whether it can bring about moral deliverance on so large a scale as religion in the past. We have also to wait for further development before we can justly estimate the frequent criticism passed by acute observers that psycho-

therapeutic methods do not produce lasting results. But there seems little doubt that no treatment by hypnotism, suggestion, or psycho-analysis can at present produce those revolutionary inhibitions of national and racial instincts which missionaries expect as the ordinary fruits of genuine conversion. Still less can it inhibit the primary instincts of self-preservation and sex, and produce martyrs and 'eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake' with the remarkable success of religious faith. The psychologists appear to agree that suggestion alone can never produce an act which is contrary to the deep-seated instincts of the subject. The overcoming of fear, widely acknowledged as one of the moral triumphs of Christianity, is inexplicable on the theory of auto-suggestion. We have the authority of Dr Crichton Miller, himself a leading psycho-analyst, for saying that 'by all psychological law, the auto-suggestion of fear should be the stronger . . ., unless some factor other than auto-suggestion is at work on the side of fearlessness.'¹

Once again we have to assume that the moral results of Christianity require a theological hypothesis to account for them.

III

A testing time of men's beliefs comes when they are exposed to the bigger shocks of life. Bereavement, war, loss of fortune or health, any great calamity or disillusionment are great destroyers of comfortable

¹ Rouse and Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

dreams : but realities have a way of coming through with enhanced vitality and a surer challenge.

It has been so with men's religious opinions. Superstitious fancies are always cropping up in human history, but they are not the things that last. They wither and decay when exposed to this draughty world. Christian conviction, on the other hand, has displayed a remarkable tenacity against very varied troubles, and its stability and persistence may well be counted evidence of its truth. The Church began its independent career as a *religio illicita*, and its first great man outside the apostolic group was the martyr Stephen. Persecution was its normal atmosphere for a considerable part of the first three centuries. From the days of Stephen, James, Paul and Ignatius, to the sorrows of the churches of Russia and Asia Minor at the present time, in some land or another Christianity has been continually tested as by fire. It has never shone with greater splendour or voiced its challenge with more arresting power than in the lives of the martyrs. They themselves have known, and their persecutors have not seldom been forced to acknowledge, the workings of a power stronger than death.

Yet the overcoming of even such appalling trials as theirs, though they strike the imagination most strongly, is not the most convincing testimony to the reality of the Christian experience. The human spirit has a magnificent way of rising to heroism in a desperate extremity without conscious reliance on God, and apparently in virtue of its own powers : every mine explosion or disaster at sea provides noble illustrations : and, moreover, fanaticism has had its

martyrs in causes where truth and falsehood were deeply intermingled. The persistence of Christian faith has greater evidential value in the numberless cases of ordinary obscure Christians who, without spiritual exaltations to buoy them up, have steadily resisted the strong suggestions of self-interest, or the difficulties of daily contact with an indifferent or hostile environment. 'The strength of the central convictions of the Church is measured by the forces of disruption and decline they have resisted.'¹ No one can doubt that these forces are many and powerful: and we must add that those who have been exposed to them are not in themselves select personalities of special toughness, nor are they in most cases learned men or trained thinkers, able to take a wide philosophical view of life and its problems. The truth seems to be that men and women have found, age after age, something inescapable in the knowledge and love of God in Christ, however they may phrase that experience, however dim their realization may be. Many quite ordinary English people, reading for the first time Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*, must have said to themselves with a gasp of delighted astonishment, 'This is what I, in my own measure, have seen and known.' They know there are difficulties that threaten to make shipwreck of faith, they feel the pull of other forces: but their Christian experience holds them, and increasingly colours their whole life. Delusions may persist for a long time in morbid subjects. But, as it is impossible to hold

¹ T. R. Glover, *Nature and Purpose of a Christian Society*, p. 38, quoted by Rouse and Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

that Christians in general have been subnormal neuropaths, so is it impossible that delusions should produce that steadily widening enrichment of personality which we may observe in many Christians, faced with difficult and depressing conditions. If we can ever test a truth claim by its power, not only to survive but also to feed and train personality, we can confidently so test the Christian claim.

IV

In all that we have been saying in this chapter, the *dynamic* quality of the Christian experience has been prominent. Its capacity to overcome ethnic and intellectual differences, to take the sting out of the fundamental puzzles of life, to produce moral changes sometimes drastic and revolutionary, to hold men's allegiance against most persistent suggestion from other quarters—all this testifies to power in action. And when we concentrate attention on this aspect of Christianity, we cannot but see that the note of power is a main characteristic of the Christian experience.

Here again we cannot do more than summarize the evidence. Christianity not only completely transforms individuals : we see how in the history of peoples it has made, bound together, or broken nations ; how it has turned the world upside down in the ethics of sex, slavery, and the care of the weak. Great Christians, to quote Dr Rufus Jones, have shifted ' the levels of life for the race ' ; witness S. Francis, Wesley or

Livingstone. Indeed, to describe its social effects at length would be to write again the history of European and American civilization. To the individual it brings not only peace, but in very many cases a heightened personal effectiveness all round. It stimulates the will, and increases the individual's social value. This philanthropy has been the most marked result of Christian faith, but there is plenty of evidence of Christianity stirring the intellect to more vigorous activity, and bringing health not only to the soul, but also (as we have been learning again in recent years) to the body. If from the motive power that is behind such fellowship and unselfish service, such educational and philanthropic enterprise and effort for social betterment as the world can show, we were to deduct all that can be referred to a Christian source, the prospect for society would be grave indeed.

All this output of energy, whether in society or in the individual, can hardly be squared with what psychology knows about delusions. Delusions go with powerlessness, or with waste of effort and a spasmodic and aimless frittering away of the individual's energies. The massive results of the power that comes through Christianity are the very opposite of this. But they harmonize exactly with what Christians believe about God and His relation to man. If God's transcendence excluded immanence, we should get a religion of submissive obedience to law without power. Man's duty would be negative, he would have nothing to do but comply with the fiats of the governor of the universe. 'Thou shalt not' is the formula of all deisms. God

would not be an inspiration and a power, but a sanction behind an order : and S. Paul's experience of his own powerlessness to fulfil the law is typical of human experience in the like circumstances. Again, if God's immanence excluded transcendence, and He were indistinguishable from natural energy, we should get a religion of power, but it would be non-moral. Pagan naturalism and the powerful sacraments of paganism have been our examples of such a religion : and they are always in the long run antinomian. They may sometimes produce a morbid asceticism, springing from an identification of matter and evil, but more often they have been orgiastic and licentious. Mere physical energy in the abstract is morally neutral, but moral choice and a standard of moral reference are always required when man comes to use the powers of Nature : for by the law of his being man and morality necessarily come on the scene together. Timber is non-moral, but man can use it either to uphold the floor of a hospital or for wrecking a train. Thus man needs an objective standard of holiness which can control energy from above by introducing the concept of moral value.

The origin of this concept is to be sought in the natural order ; but once it dawned on the human mind, man was on the way out of a religion of pure immanence. We may suppose that in the history of the race prudential considerations of tribal welfare first suggested a choice among things and acts, and that in the rules governing such choices, crystallized into customs and tabus and provided with crude supernatural sanctions, we have the origin of morality.

It was a long journey from this before man came to the point of seeing a spiritual order, continuous with but rising above the natural, and discerning in it an eternal holiness, a 'Kingdom of God' of which the many codes of the nations were distorted images. But not until men did reach this insight did the principles of morality become intelligible. For not any principle of conduct can be adopted and become 'moral' by being called so. Whatever we may do or think, love is always better than hate, honesty better than malice, loyalty than treachery. That means there is a transcendent moral order which we do not make but find.

If, then, we discover a religion wherein power is morally directed and morality spiritually energized, we shall expect to find it avoiding the pitfalls of deism on the one hand and naturalism on the other, by reconciling transcendence and immanence into a unity. This is precisely what the Christian conception of God does. For Christianity duty is not obedience to a stereotyped law, but the working out in life of moral principles caught rather than taught in the loving intercourse of the human spirit with the Divine Spirit. These principles are perfectly illustrated for our guidance in the life of Christ, and can be generalized from His life and teaching. But the reapplication of the principles to the infinitely various conditions of human life is a fruit of that educative inspiring friendship of the soul with the risen Christ. A vital relationship, not a mechanical obedience, is the Christian 'way.' Christians are not primarily interested in moral rules, but in union with the Divine energy.

'Love and do what you like' is S. Augustine's daring but profoundly true way of expressing it. But this is not lawless anarchy. The energy of Christianity is the energy of a *Holy* God. The power of great Christians is a sanctified and sanctifying power. What is communicated in prayer and sacraments is not some magical endowment for the attainment of personal desires : it is the liberation and redirection of the soul's awakening faculties for the service of God which is perfect freedom. It is not the power of force, but the moral power of holy love. It can only come when there is the capacity for love and the desire for love in the soul who seeks. Neither the commercial nor the magical idea of religion has any place in Christianity.

We have followed some of the lines along which evidence can be discovered in verification of the Christian belief that man can and does truly experience the living God. Verification, we are told by the logicians, is not proof. Without stopping to inquire whether their notion of 'proof' is one which can be reasonably applied in religion (or in science for that matter), we can at least feel confident that the evidence from results which we have been considering is entirely harmonious with the truth of the Christian claim and very baffling on the illusion theory. The hypothesis of Divine action in the world and of man's experience of it is at least made more probable. Probability is relative to data. And it is undeniable that there is a great mass of data in favour of religious experience. We have also to bear in mind that, when we come to

the matters of greatest moment in human life, we seem compelled to be content with the wisdom of Bishop Butler when he said that probability is the guide of life.¹

However that may be, it has been already hinted in the last section that we are not confined solely to an inductive argument from results. There are general principles, derived from quite other and non-religious sides of life and experience, which provide us with a confirmatory deductive argument exactly fitting our inductive argument: and the convergence is very striking, for it raises the degree of probability empirically established as high as it well can go. This

¹ It may perhaps be well to anticipate a possible objection at this point. The argument that Christian experience is self-verifying will perhaps be met by a reference to other great and successful religions which contradict the fundamentals of Christianity. To take the most difficult instance, the teaching of Gautama the Buddha is radically opposed to the Christian faith about God, redemption and the world purpose: yet Buddhism has had a long life, and has eminent piety and holiness and much spiritual exaltation to its credit. Do not these results, it will be asked, verify the contradiction of Christianity?

The answer is twofold. (1) In so far as Buddhist holiness and spiritual serenity are due to a desire to escape from sin and to live according to an ideal norm, they are best explained by the Christian theory of the all-pervading Logos, the source of all good. In so far as the 'goodness' of Buddhists is due to a selfish desire for one's own escape, through avoidance of sin, from the wheel of things, the inferiority of motive means a definitely lower moral value in Buddhist as compared with Christian conduct. (2) The history of Buddhism itself condemns its own original indifference to God: for the later Buddhism flatly contradicts the undoubted historic teaching of Gautama by reintroducing the idea of God and prayer. It is then no longer an antithesis to Christianity, but a fumbling approximation to it, like any other ethnic religion based on belief in some kind of Divine power.

chapter, and the whole essay, may end by reminding the reader in the briefest possible general statement what that argument is, in order that our argument from verification may not seem to hang unsupported in the air.

As soon as we begin to think about the general problems of philosophy, we have to attempt to understand our experience of the outside world. It is obviously *our* experience: but does experience proceed solely from our minds, or is it the interaction of our minds with a Given from without ?

Philosophers have never been able to agree about the kind of relationship which exists between the human mind and what we call the 'external' world of material things.¹ But if we set aside solipsism—the belief that my own mind and its ideas are the only existent reality—as a gratuitous and wildly improbable eccentricity, it does not seem rationally possible to doubt either the existence of other minds than our own or the existence of an objective Reality of which those minds share experience with our own. We cannot otherwise understand the simple fact that Brown, Jones and Robinson can sit round the same table. The various schools of idealists, despite their differences among themselves and their common disagreement with the realists about the part played by mind in the experience which we call perceiving an external object, all assert the independence of the

¹ For convenient short discussions of this problem by competent modern philosophers, the reader is referred to Russell's *Problems of Philosophy* and Rashdall's *Philosophy and Religion*: the first is written from a realist, the second from an idealist, standpoint.

object in one sense at least. However strongly we may hold that matter can only exist for mind, we must believe that it has external and independent existence in relation to anything less than God or the totality of minds which exist. When the planet Neptune came to the knowledge of astronomers, we cannot suppose the perceiving of it by its discoverers was the creation of it by them. Unless all science is nonsense, the planet and its orbit existed long before it was discovered and long before any human beings existed (at any rate on this earth) to know it. It must therefore have existed for some universal or Divine Mind. Even if we adopt Dr M'Taggart's fanciful atheistic variant of Hegelianism and say that the ultimate reality is a society of uncreated, immortal, but finite minds, it would be ludicrous to suppose that the world of matter could be willed or thought into existence or out of it by any rebellious section of these minds.

Thus, at the outset of our thought about the universe we are led (irresistibly, as it seems to me) to postulate the existence of a Given in our experience, and a Given which not only exists but exists as an ordered system. This discovery is not confined to the material world. We find that there exists also a moral order, which conditions our actions, a logical order which conditions our thinking, a realm of beauty, which we perceive with our æsthetic sense. There is a Given in all these sides of experience which the most ingenious subjectivism cannot eradicate. And it is even more decisively objective than the external world of matter. For we cannot believe that even God Himself could

make unselfish love bad, or treacherous hate good, merely by giving them those names. If London is south of Manchester, and Manchester is south of Edinburgh, no amount of thought to the contrary will ever make Edinburgh south of London. We do not make the glory of the sunset any more than we make the sunset.

Now some philosophers are content to stop at this point, and calling the cosmic order itself living and active, make it the same as God. But this is as unreal an abstraction as that other philosophical monstrosity the 'Unconscious Will.' For all this active Ordering without an active Orderer, 'this strange intermezzo,' as von Hügel calls it, if it is thinkable at all, would really be an automatic machine on a lower level of value than the spiritual beings who apprehend it. Man would be more godlike than God. Thus the hypothesis that God exists becomes in the highest degree probable. It becomes very difficult to see how we can avoid the conclusion that both the material world and the spiritual world of Truth, Beauty and Goodness or Love, lead us to a creative and sustaining Will to whom the cosmic order is to be attributed.

If that be so, and if God, among other things, is indeed the Spirit of Goodness, then we may without irreverence venture to think that it is an inherent necessity of His own nature that He should reveal Himself to the spiritual beings whom He has created. For nothing less would be compatible with the Love which is perfect Goodness. We cannot conceive that, if God is really God, He will not make

Himself known in such ways as seem good to His wisdom.

Has He done so ?

The fact of religious experience is the answer to this question. For what do we find ? Simply this, that the characteristic form of all true religion, though it involves a metaphysic and can be metaphysically approached, is not the searching of the human intellect, an *a priori* argument for God, nor a demonstration of His existence by arguments from Nature and human life : it is a voice from God, Revelation by and in religious experience, and in the highest example primarily to the moral consciousness.

Here, then, are the two converging lines of approach to religious truth. Man learns of God because God has met him more than half-way, and he comes at length to know that God is self-giving love. But thought as well as faith is a human quality. Philosophic reflexion, striving to come to a rational explanation of life, and solely interested in discovering metaphysical truth, is led by strict processes of thought to the discovery that only a God who must reveal Himself can make life intelligible. This apprehension of truth is quite distinct from the first : if the same man attains both,—and only a minority can do so, for most men are not philosophers,—he normally does it at quite different times : and he reaches them by essentially different processes. There is no more striking fact in the experience of man than that the simple wayfaring Christian and the philosopher can and do arrive by such different routes at one and the same conclusion.

How can we explain it ? There seems nothing which can even approximately explain this harmony unless what S. Augustine said be indeed true : ' *Fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te* '—Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee.

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132 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION ?

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A COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE subject of Christian experience and its validity forms part of the larger problem of the nature and reality of experience, though the considerable difference in the treatment of the nature and functions of experience in modern philosophical writers is apt to be confusing. Speaking generally the philosophical tendency is towards a realist construction of experience.

In considering the psychological treatment of religious experience we find a lack of clearness in its primary conceptions, which make it difficult to summarize its conclusions. Modern psychology has dispensed with the soul, and, following *James*, is inclined to regard consciousness as a meaningless term. Still, even if it disregards it, there is an uneasy feeling that some other concept will have to take its place. The drift of investigation indicates that an adequate analysis of consciousness or the group of qualities we substitute for it will only be reached through a painstaking examination of the facts of behaviour. Psychology is being led to abandon the introspective standpoint and ally itself much more closely with physiological and biological research.

In the development of the new psychology considerable diversity has been manifested between the various schools, and it is not easy to say how much of the largely speculative work of Jung or the more daring generalizations of Freud will ultimately be recognized. In Jung the *libido* is a generic term under which all the instincts are combined, their specific differences being effected by a continuous process of sublimation. Freud, on the other hand, has always adhered to the normal distinction between the egoistic, sexual, and gregarious instincts, and referred the *libido* to the sexual instinct.

The concept of the unconscious has been and still is subject to considerable hostile criticism, perhaps the result of the somewhat nebulous descriptions which are given by the new psychologists. On the one side the tendency is to see in the conscious and unconscious states the distinctions between mental structure and mental functions, on the other, the unconscious is identified more closely with the evolutionary aims in biological instinct. Students who wish to go beyond the elementary stage will find the whole subject very thoroughly discussed in the *British Journal of Psychology*, and also in *Mind*.

The psychological study of religion has been influenced very considerably by *Durkheim* and *Flournoy*. But the latter's attempt to exclude the idea of transcendence and seek a purely biological interpretation of the facts has broken down, and in his later work Flournoy himself has not been able to keep within his own limits. But, whilst this is true, modern psychological writers seek increasingly the solution of problems of religious experience upon purely bio-psychological considerations. This is apparent not only in *Freud* and *Jung*, but in *Leuba*, *Reik*, etc. There is no acknowledgment of any specific religious instinct, and the religious consciousness is regarded as a sublimation of one or other of the primary instincts.

The curt dismissal of the soul as a misleading entity will not, however, be altogether lost if it leads Christian psychologists to a more precise description and analysis of the fundamental groundwork of religious experience. The increasing tendency to look at the problems of religion as concrete is seen in the method of analysis of the experiences of a single figure. Paul, Mohammed, Luther, and others have been subjected to such analysis, and in two recent works the figure of Jesus has been scrutinized in the same manner. *Dr Stanley Hall's* work is interesting to the Christian student only in one or two directions, chiefly in his recognition of the original ideas underlying Jesus' conception of the Messiahship. Much more valuable is the work of *Dr Georges Berquer*. For Dr Berquer Jesus is supreme morally and

spiritually. 'La Vie de Jesus est une affirmation et une demonstration de la sublimation jusqu'au divin. . . . La vie du Christ introduit ainsi dans le monde des valeurs nouvelles que rien ne peut plus arracher a l'humanite. En ce sens elle modifie la psychologie même de l'homme ; au plutot elle ajoute une dynamique nouvelle . . .' The latter part of the book will give the student a valuable insight into the work of *Jung*, *Rank*, *Silberer*, etc.

A word must be said on the extensive researches of *Abrahams*, *Rank*, *Reik*, *Riklin*, upon the formation of myths and the history of symbolism. *Silberer's* work is of the first importance, and is in a class apart. There is considerable divergence of view as to the origin and development of symbolic forms. The group of writers who follow *Jung*, *Maeder*, *Stekel*, *Constance Long*, see in symbolism the result of an incapacity for expressing apprehensions which are strongly affective in character. The underlying unconscious impulse seeks, through regression, a more primitive symbolical expression. Whilst *Jung* lays stress on sublimation as the way of escape, the Freudian school does not acknowledge that the original symbolic idea is capable of any sublimation. Progress is attained by the ideas represented in the symbolic expression becoming attached to the non-inhibited conscious and socially useful ideas and interests. The real explanation of the symbol is to be sought only in the idea underlying its use, which is always concrete, and not through the analysis of later and more highly sophisticated symbolic equivalents. *Jung* and his school see in symbolic forms what is termed an anagogic significance. Symbolism expresses a point of fixation at a more primitive stage, at which the *libido* halts in its upward striving towards an ideal goal and the significance of the ideal is present in the symbolic form. This illustrates the almost complete divergence in point of view and methods of approach between two schools, and it is much to be desired that the whole subject could be surveyed and elucidated from a more distinctly religious standpoint.

A. B. B.

INDEX

- ABRAHAM, 40
 Abraham, Dr K., 29
 Agnosticism, 44, 95, 99
 Albigenses, 43
 Alexandria, 43
 Alva, Duke of, 73
 Aristotle, 3, 15, 54, 116
 Arnold, M., 4
 Atthis, 33
 Augustine, S., 8, 54, 115, 124,
 130
 Austerities, 115
 Authority in religion and science,
 51 ff.
- BACON, ROGER, 43
 Balfour, Earl, of, 60
 Bergson, H., 26
 Bevan, E., 36 n.
 Bible, 17, 40 ff., 62, 71, 72, 94,
 105
 Bois, H., 107
 Bonaventura, S., 8
 Bousset, 105
 Boyle's law, 83
 Bradley, F. H., 20, 95
 Bruno, 43
 Buddhism, 2, 125
 Butler, Bishop, 125
- CALVIN, 43, 76
 Carlyle, T., 97
 Catherine, S., of Siena, 115
 Catholicism, Anglican, 75
 Roman, 90
 Chandler, Bishop, 85 n.
 'Christ-myth,' 33-4
- Christian experience, species of
 religious experience, 4
 highest type of religion, 5
 and faith, 9
 agnosticism in, 10, 99
 implicit, 10
 and doubt, 19
 and father-imago, 32
 evidential value of, 48 ff.
 verification of, 102 ff.
 and history, 103 ff.
 consistency of, 106 ff.
 and reason, 110
 and fundamental problems,
 111
 moral fruits of, 113 ff.
 romantic element in, 114-6
 persistence of, 117 ff.
 and power, 120 ff.
 Christianity and 'good
 Europeans,' 13
 supposed origin of, 34
 and divine personality, 99
 and dogma, 110
 Christology, 94
 Constantine, Emperor, 75
 Conybeare, F. C., 103
 Copernicus, 43
 Council of Trent, 75
 Croce, B., 69 n.
 Cromwell, O., 73
- DAMIEN, Fr., 15, 115
 Darwin, C., 70, 89
 David, 40
 Directed thinking, 27, 110
 Dogmatics, Christian, 110-111
 Doubt, causes of, 16 ff.

138 IS CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AN ILLUSION?

Dreams, 27, 29, 61
Drews, Prof., 88, 103

ELECTRA-COMPLEX, 32
Ellis, H. Havelock, 13, 87 n.
Eucharist, 9, 83, 109
Evil, problem of, 18 ff.
Experience, data of, 18
 of spiritual world, 98
 religious, nature of, 4, 7, 8, 10,
 14. See Christian Ex-
 perience

FAITH, 9, 50
Father-imago, 32, 89
Feuerbach, 45
Flournoy, 85
Francis, S., of Assisi, 3, 54, 115,
 120
Frazer, Sir J., 24, 103
Freud, Sig., 25, 29, 87 n.

GALILEO, 43
Gautama. See Buddhism
Glover, T. R., 119 n.
Goethe, 93
Grace, 92

HARNACK, A. VON, 42, 105, 110
Harrison, Jane, 25
Hegel, 127
Hellenistic theology, 36
Henley, W. E., 36
Höfding, H., 85
Hügel, F. von, 38, 54, 58, 68,
 71, 109, 128

IGNATIUS, S., of Antioch, 118
Illusion, 18, 49, 106, 119, 121
Immanence, 93
Inge, W. R., 8, 14, 55
Inquisition, 43
Isaiah, 7, 54, 114

JACOB, 40, 62
James, S., 118
James, W., 23, 28, 39, 49, 85
JESUS in Christian experience, 4
 historical, 34, 88, 103-6
John, S., 56, 64, 65, 94
Jones, R., 120
Jung, C., 25 ff., 78, 87 ff.

LEUBA, Prof., 39, 46
Libido, 26 ff.
Livingstone, D., 115, 121
Logos, 93
Loisy, A., 42, 105
Lucretius, 44, 67, 89
Luther, 43

MARY, B. V., 90
Method, scientific. See Science
Miller, Dr Crichton, 102 n., 117
Miracles, 41
Mithras, 30, 33
Moloch, 42
Montaigne, 43
Morality, origin of, 122
 Christian, 123
Moses, 7, 40, 41
Mozley, J. K., 77
M'Taggart, Dr, 127
Mysticism, 6, 55-6, 93, 94
Myth, as racial phantasy, 29
 Christianity and, 30
 the 'Christ', 33

OCCAM, WILLIAM OF, 25
Oedipus complex, 32
Old Testament. See Bible.
Osiris, 30, 33

PARTHENON, 15
Paul, S., 6, 7, 53, 54, 56, 94, 118,
 122
Pearson, K., 83 n.
Persecution, religious, 43, 72
Personality, divine, 99
 human, 68

Phallic worship, 33
 Phantasy-thinking, 27
 Philosophy and religion, 126 ff.
 Prayer, 34
 Proof in religion, 19 ff.
 Psychology, what, 79 ff.
 and values, 82 ff.
 and theology, 91
Psychology of the Unconscious,
 partial analysis of, 27-36
 criticism of, 87 ff.
 Psycho-therapy, 94, 116
 Pythagoreanism, 93

RASHDALL, H., 126 n.
 Religion, origin of, 8, 31 ff.
 proof in, 19 ff.
 inconsistencies of, 39 ff., 58 ff.
 anti-social qualities of, 42 ff.,
 67 ff.
 and human limitations, 44,
 91 ff.
 symbolism in, 62
 psychology and, 78 ff.
 universality of, 96
 and Reality, 97
 Ribot, 86
 Robertson, J. M., 103
 Rouse, Ruth, 102 n.
 Russell, B., 2, 126 n.

SAINTS, authority of, 53 ff.
 Scholasticism, 28
 Schopenhauer, 26
 Schubert, 20
 Schweitzer, A., 105
 Science, and directed thinking,
 27
 and faith, 50 ff.
 history of, 60
 and psychology, 79 ff.
 and theology, 85, 91
 and epistemology, 95

Servetus, 43
 Sin, 109
 Slessor, Mary, 115
 Smith, Prof. Elliott, 88
 Snark, the, 84
 Solipsism, 61, 95
 Spencer, H., 95
 Spinoza, 2
 Starbuck, Prof., 39
 Stephen, S., 118
 Stout, Prof. G. F., 79
 Suggestion, 92 ff.
 Sundar Singh, Sadhu, 56
 Sun worship, 33
 Symbolism, 62

TAMMUZ, 33
 Tertullian, 7, 111
 Thinking, directed, 27, 110
 Thomson, Prof. J. A., 85
 Thompson, F., 119
 Trent, Council of, 75
 Trinity, doctrine of, 111

UNCONSCIOUS, the, 22, 24, 26 n.,
 27 ff., 79-80, 86, 89
 'Unconscious Will,' 128
 'Unknowable,' the, 45, 95

VALUE-JUDGMENT, 82 ff., 91 ff.,
 122
 Vedanta, 93
 Von Hügel, F. See Hügel, F. von

WAGGETT, Fr. P. N., 50 n.
 Webb, Prof. C. C. J., 4
 Wells, H. G., 13, 19
 Wesley, John, 120
 Woodworth, Prof., 80 n.
 Wordsworth, 8

YAHWEH, 40

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